

Editorial

Report to the WPC Executive Committee
Thanassis Pafilis
WPC General Secretary
Hanoi — 19-20 November 2007

Dear Comrades,

Our meeting being held here in Hanoi is one of the most important ones for the World Peace Council. It will deal with recent developments, the increased and serious activity undertaken by the WPC and, mainly, it will set the course leading up to our Assembly, which is to take place this coming April in Caracas, Venezuela.

We would like to thank the Vietnamese Peace Committee and this country, which has shown us such hospitality and which constitutes a symbol in the anti-imperialist struggle. We trust that the presence of the WPC in Vietnam will, to the best of our power, contribute to our solidarity with the difficult struggle it is waging today.

One year and a half has passed since the last meeting of the Executive Committee, held in Brasilia, Brazil. Significant developments have taken place, which confirm our assessment and underscore the need for the WPC to contribute to the upswing in the peace movement and the peoples' struggles. Humanity as a whole is facing the accelerated aggressiveness of the imperialist system. Its concerted effort to secure its domination is accompanied by an exacerbation and an upsurge in rivalries over markets and for geopolitical and geo-strategic dominance. Little by little, this struggle is embracing all continents. It is becoming particularly acute in regions of strategic importance for economic and geopolitical control, such as the Balkans, Eurasia and Africa. The huge accumulation of profits from the predatory exploitation of the working people and countries leads to the need for the imperialists to seek new markets in other countries with more intensive exploitation and robbing of their natural and human resources. These huge rivalries lead to an intensification of exploitation of the working people in all countries and to a general offensive on popular and democratic rights.

The unprecedented scientific and technical opportunities that now exist for mankind to meet human needs conflict with the exploitation and the law of profit that prevails. Popular discontent is growing, along with the demand for a different policy. The inability of the imperialist system to deal with the problems, the impasse it is facing and its quest for profit make it more dangerous.

Internationally, war already constitutes an inherent part of developments. The overturning of principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter is a reality. Militarisation is taking on huge dimensions. Military spending has already exceeded what it was during the cold war. With the big imperialist powers in the forefront, all countries — according to their size — are being drawn into the arsenal-building game, while 30,000 people a day starve to death and half of the

continued on page 2

FOR A NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE ZONE IN THE MIDDLE EAST!

Georges Spriet
General Secretary of Vrede
Belgian Peace Movement

A nuclear weapon free zone is a well described region, the countries of which compel themselves not to produce, purchase, test or possess nuclear weapons. The treaty installing such a zone contains a particular protocol that is to be ratified by the nuclear weapons states from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), i.e., China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States of America. In this protocol, which has legal force, the big five declare to respect the nature of this zone, and not to use — nor threaten to use — nuclear weapons in possible conflicts with members of the concerned treaty.

Up to now, various regions of the world have been declared nuclear weapon free. Latin America and the Caribbean (treaty of Tlatelolco), the South Pacific (treaty of Rarotonga), for instance, although discussions continue with the big five nuclear weapons states. The treaty of Pelindaba for Africa was accepted by the USA but under conditions, and the United Kingdom doesn't want to include Diego Garcia, an island in the Indian Ocean that London rents to Washington, or should I say to the Pentagon. The treaty of Bangkok, declaring South-East Asia nuclear weapon free, was not signed by the big five.

United Nations accept the status of an "independent nation free of nuclear weapons" by recognising the official declaration by Mongolia in this field. Five ex-Soviet countries in Central Asia declared themselves nuclear weapon free. Antarctica, at the bottom of the ocean, is nuclear free.

This long introduction just wants to explain that the idea of nuclear weapon free zone is well known in diplomatic and political circles. It has quite a history as a non-proliferation instrument alongside the general treaties of NPT, or the Test Ban Treaty for instance.

Critical observers object that all the easy regions are now covered by such a treaty. But that the rest of the world consists of really hot spots, with either countries that possess nuclear arms or regions of high tension where the big powers defend important geopolitical and economic interests.

Indeed, a treaty for the Middle East would not only be an agreement on non-proliferation but, in the first place, an agreement on disarmament, due to the fact that Israel already retains nuclear weapons. A thorough and effective verification regime should be put in place in order to create political confidence. Other political and military elements are increasing the complexity of this issue as there are nuclearised neighbours like Pakistan, and the general mistrust towards Iran.

A treaty on a nuclear weapon free zone is in fact a regional security treaty. It cannot be realised out of the blue. In the negotiating process, guarantees have to be produced in order to respond to all security demands of each country concerned. This way of tackling the security problems of the Middle East is a far better way to de-mine the conflict as it opens political perspectives on disarmament and halts the negative spiral toward announced wars.

The General Conference of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) of September 2007 passed a resolution on the necessity of establishing a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East. It invites countries that haven't yet subscribed to the non-proliferation regime to do so. United States and Israel voted against. Except for Ireland that voted in favour,

continued on page 11

all the member states of the European Union abstained. According to the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they did so because they felt the resolution was politically abused by some Arab countries. Apparently, for them, inviting Israel to join the non-proliferation treaty is an abuse of the political situation. Indeed, according to the non-written Western policy of double standards, a friend that is trespassing all the rules represents no problem, but an ideological

or economic enemy, with just a vague shade of suspicion on nuclear arms, should be isolated and treated as a rogue state.

The peace movements could however try and grasp the chance that the IAEA resolution offers, to publicly force their governments to act accordingly. Imagine for just a moment that 'Brussels' would officially recognise that Israel possesses nuclear arms, which should be

continued on page 3

Press Release of the World Peace Council about the WPC World Assembly the World Peace Conference April 8-13, 2008, Caracas, Venezuela



The World Peace Council (WPC) held a successful Executive Committee meeting on November 19-20 in the capital of Vietnam, Hanoi. The WPC expresses its gratitude to the Vietnam Peace Committee for its generosity in hosting the WPC Executive Committee.

Major item of the agenda, amongst other topics, was holding the next Assembly of the WPC, as the highest decision making body of the Organisation. The Executive Committee decided unanimously to accept the readiness of our Member Organisation from Venezuela, COSI (Committee for International Solidarity) to host the WPC Assembly, and announced the holding of other events around the World Assembly of the WPC for the dates of 8th -13th April, 2008, in Venezuela; declaring for one week Caracas the "World Capital of Peace and the anti-imperialist struggle."

Under the above slogan, the WPC is going to hold its (outgoing) Executive Committee Meeting on the 8th April, its Assembly on 9th and 10th April, and an open, broad World Peace Conference on 11th and 12th April. The 13th April will be dedicated to the peoples who are in struggle for the sovereignty against foreign interference, coinciding with the 6th year of the restoration of peoples' power after the attempted coup d'état in Venezuela in 2002.

The WPC appreciates the disposition of the Venezuelan government and its institutions which warmly welcomed the decision of the WPC. The Secretariat of the WPC will work with COSI and the National Preparatory Committee in Venezuela, for the successful holding of the WPC events.

The WPC is proud to be able to share the aspirations and struggles of the peoples of Latin America, and considers the political developments in the region as very encouraging and promising. By holding our Assembly in Caracas, for the first time in South America, we write a new chapter in the glorious history of the WPC, opening a new phase for the development of the anti-imperialist peace movement world wide. The WPC is entering the next Assembly in a new period, where we all have to demand more from ourselves. We shall make our WPC stronger, based in even more countries, more visible and a more useful tool for the coming difficult struggles of the world peace movement. Very soon respective materials, web site and invitations shall be issued and sent out.

The Organisations which participated in the Executive Committee Meeting in Hanoi were the following: Vietnam Peace Committee, Cuban Movement for Peace and the sovereignty of the Peoples, Greek Committee for international Détente and Peace, Committee for International Solidarity (Venezuela), Portuguese Council for Peace and Cooperation, Mexican Movement for Peace and Development, Movement for Peace and Solidarity (Argentine), Japan Peace Committee, Bangladesh Peace Council, Brazilian Center for the struggle for Peace and Solidarity of the Peoples, US Peace Council, Congo Peace Committee, OSPAAAL Spain, All India Peace and Solidarity Organisations, Syrian Peace Committee, Korean National Peace Committee, German Peace Council, Spanish Committee for the defense of Solidarity and Peace, Sri Lanka Peace Council, Lao Peace and Solidarity Committee, Mongolian Union for Friendship and Peace and AAPSO as guest.

The Secretariat of WPC
30 November 2007



Editorial

(from p. 1)

world's population subsists on less than two dollars a day. This reality is so harsh and so blatant that it renders yet more imperative the need to create a counterweight to imperialism so as to harness its aggressiveness and help to overthrow it. The World Peace Council is called on to contribute to this struggle, especially today when any illusions that had been created in the past are being dispersed by reality.

We do not wish to repeat the political assessments we have debated in the past many times as regards developments, but rather would focus our discussion on the main spheres in which we are called upon to take action:

The three wars unleashed to date by NATO and the USA in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq, Israel's war on Lebanon, the threats made regarding an immediate attack on Iran and the dozens of interventions on all continents open the way for dangerous situations to arise. The consequences of all this are already influencing not only the countries directly affected but also entire regions. Despite the increased reaction to this and the resistance of the peoples, the US, NATO and their allies are continuing on the same path. This has been at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives and tremendous destruction. Participation in the war in Afghanistan is on the rise with the inclusion of non-NATO member countries. The situation in that country is deteriorating. The only sector that is developing is that of opium poppy cultivation, which grew by 50 percent from 2004 to 2006, meeting 93 percent of the world market demand for opiates, according to the pertinent UN report. Thousands of civilians, including women and children, have been killed by NATO troops. According to assessments made by the General Secretary of NATO, it does not look as if this war will end even in the next ten years.

The situation in Iraq is worsening and the war's consequences, along with the plans to attack Iran, are spreading over the entire region. Despite the nearly universal opposition of the peoples, including the people of the USA, and despite the robust resistance of the Iraqi people and the demand for the withdrawal of the occupation troops, neither the Bush administration nor the "Democratic" opposition has made any commitment to withdraw. The USA, NATO and the EU are preparing to intervene in Iran. The more general economic and military importance of the

continued on page 3

US-Led Joint Naval Exercise in the Bay of Bengal: Imperial War Game in South Asia

Hasan Tarique Chowdhury
Secretary, Bangladesh Peace Council

We can recall our history when US Navy's Seventh Fleet came to the Bay of Bengal in 1971 to defeat the Liberation War of Bangladesh. It was the time when this fleet tried to intimidate India as it fought Pakistan along with Bangladeshi freedom fighter in a war that led to Bangladesh's birth. It was the period when Indian foreign policy upheld the principles of Non Align Movement and followed the path towards self-reliance. But now, the scenario has been changed.

Ironically, last September, the same Seventh Fleet was back in the same waters, equipped with a second aircraft carrier, a nuclear submarine and scores of fighter jets in the biggest U.S. naval assembly in 36 years. According to Reuters, the fleet anchored under cloudy skies in the middle of the Bay of Bengal was the US aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk, which was involved in the war against Iraq in 2003, while INS Viraat, India's lone aircraft carrier, sailed alongside.

This event clearly signals that by departing from Nehruvian foreign policy, the present government of India is trying to establish a closer military ties with USA and also to put itself in the strategic orbit of USA, which is a long desired agenda of USA. This new trend of Indian foreign policy has been seriously criticised by the cross section of intellectuals, security analysts and the left political parties of India rather than welcomed by the common people.

After a tense face-off with the UPA government on the Indo-US nuclear deal, the Left parties of India are hitting the streets this week in a nationwide mass campaign against the US led joint naval exercises involving India, Australia and Singapore. According to September 2 report of PTI, the four parties kick-started two simultaneous 'jathas' (processions) on 4th September 2007 from Chennai and Kolkata to protest the naval war games besides organising separate campaigns against the "anti-people" policies of the government. Indian Left parties are of the view that the joint exercises in the Bay of Bengal from September 4-9 was a major step towards India joining a "strategic security cooperation" with the US, Australia and Japan. The 'jathas', led by CPI(M) General Secretary Prakash Karat from Chennai and his CPI counterpart, A. B. Bardhan from Kolkata, had coincided with the joint exercises of India had have with the navies of the US, Japan, Australia and Singapore which concluded in Visakhapatnam on September eight. Not only the political parties, the high ranking security experts of India considers this exercise as "a recipe for greater instability in the Asia-Pacific region." According to them

it may even instigate a new cold war in this region and also may accelerate the arms race among the neighbouring countries of South Asia. They even consider this Naval Drill as the first step to establish an Asian NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) aimed to encircle China.

While this is the evaluation of Indian Security experts and left political parties, what would the Bangladeshi security experts say? Will they welcome again the seventh fleet? Will they hail the impending arms race in South Asian Region caused by the recent Indian foreign policy?

Although Bangladesh Peace Council and left political parties of Bangladesh condemned this war game in the Bay of Bengal. But, interestingly, the political parties who see themselves as a pioneer of Liberation War of 1971 and protector of sovereignty of Bangladesh remained silent over this critical is-

sue. Perhaps they are not so much concerned about the importance of natural resources and geo-political location of Bangladesh! But the patriotic and peace loving people of Bangladesh are very much concerned about the intention of this war game in the Bay of Bengal. They considered that US imperialism has become desperate to increase its global plundering and to establish its military hegemony all over the world. Its real target is to expand its arms business and enhance its military dominance by instigating conflicts and arms race among the countries of Asia and Pacific region. It also wants to utilize the natural resources, port and geo-political location of Bangladesh for the same purpose. So, the voice has been raised by the people of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan and the people of this region to build up the united resistance against this aggressive conspiracy of US imperialism. ■

DECLARATION OF ANSBACH

On 24 Nov. 2007, people from the Czech Republic, Italy, the USA, and various regions of Germany gathered at the invitation of the Ansbach Alliance for Peace [Ansbacher Friedens — bündnis] for the first Ansbach Peace Conference. The following declaration was adopted:

We vigorously oppose the use of the Urlas site and the Katterbach barracks by the US military. What is being implemented is the stationing of a reinforced "aviation brigade" (airborne troops) with more than a hundred combat helicopters, which can be deployed as a rapid-reaction force at the disposal of EUCOM [the U.S. European Command] within hours. Contrary to widely-made claims, it is not merely a matter of improving the housing situation for the U.S. soldiers already stationed here and their families. It is about creating a self-sufficient U.S. military base that can supply itself and is completely independent of the region economically.

The Aviation Brigade from Ansbach is intended to be deployed within hours to any trouble spot in the EUCOM area of command in the future. The combat helicopters from Ansbach have already participated in the U.S. war of aggression against Iraq in 2003, in violation of international law. This is a violation of Article 26 of the German Constitution and of the law of nations. It is up to Germany's legislatures, governments, and government agencies to prevent this building project (Supplementary Agreement to the NATO Status of Forces Agreement, "2 plus 4" treaty, etc.)

Even according to the tendentious poll of the citizenry that has already been conducted, there was no majority in favor of the planned expansion. Therefore, we demand a referendum, in advance of which all the U.S. Army's plans must be made available to the people.

At this conference, we agreed to expand and link more closely the resistance in Germany and all of Europe to foreign military bases and military infrastructure from which wars are planned and waged. Specifically, this means supporting our friends in Vicenza, Italy in their opposition to the expansion of the U.S. base there, and in the Czech Republic in their opposition to the installation of the U.S. missile system. The participants in the Ansbach Peace Conference support the people of Ansbach in their struggle against further militarization of their home, and for a civilian future for it.

Together, we want to resist the increasing militarization of Europe.

Hannelore Tölke

German Network Against Military Facilities



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- Japan Peace Committee
- Mexican Movement for Peace and Development (MOMPADE)
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- Senegalese Movement for Peace
- US Peace Council (USPC)
- Vietnam Peace Committee (VPC)

EDITORIAL: Report to the WPC Executive Committee

(from p. 2)

Eurasian region has drawn the interest of all the large powers. Putin's visit to Iran and the Caspian region as well as the joint communiqué, which is in the form of an agreement to refrain from using the Caspian for an attack on any country, are clear indications of this. It is obvious that if the war on Iran now being planned is actually started it will have a huge impact, with the danger of it spreading over the region.

The tension on the Iraqi-Turkish border and the preparations under way for an incursion into northern Iraq are likewise directly related to the war there and would exacerbate the situation. The stagnation in Palestine with the attempt being made to find solutions falling within the framework of imperialist interests and the uncertain situation in Lebanon show that implementation of the NATO plan for the "Democratization of the Middle East" would involve all the countries in the region.

The great battle for control over wealth-producing resources is now being brought to Africa as well. The ground is being prepared for fresh interventions and the dispatch of troops. A decision has already been taken to send 20,000 troops to Chad. Developments in Africa show that it is soon to become the next victim of the rivalries of powers that, along with everything else, dream of re-colonising it.

Although eight years have passed, the consequences of the war in Yugoslavia have caused fresh tensions in the Balkans. One main problem is the independence issue in Kosovo, which will give rise to new clashes. There are already occupation forces in the Balkans deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, while new military bases are being built.

For the WPC, the peace movement and the other social movements, stopping new wars and interventions along with the withdrawal of occupation forces are matters of high priority. At the same time, we must highlight every type of intervention, such as the unacceptable continuation of the blockade on Cuba, despite the most recent resolution taken by the UN General Assembly, a resolution that was even nearly unanimous.

We could also mention the attempt to overthrow Chavez in Venezuela, the sanctions and measures imposed on any countries that refuse to submit to imperialist barbarity, and the stirring up of ethnic and religious differences so as to create excuses to intervene.

Particularly in the case of Venezuela, we would like to express our support to the Bolivarian process backed by the masses of the Venezuelan people, trying to deepen democracy and people's participation against all kind of provocations by the ones who are loosing their privileges and by foreign interventions.

The WPC expresses its solidarity with all the peoples who resist. We consider that each people has the inalienable right to choose its own path and of course to fight against any type of intervention and occupation. We are struggling:

- For the immediate withdrawal of the occupation troops from Iraq,
- For an end to the war in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of NATO troops
- For the withdrawal of NATO and European troops from the Balkans and the Turkish troops from Cyprus.
- We are opposed to the dispatch of troops to Chad and demand the withdrawal of the foreign troops from Africa
- We reject any sort of military intervention in Iran on whatever pretext
- Expressing our solidarity with the Palestinian people, we consider that the sole just solution is an independent Palestinian state

with East Jerusalem its capital.

- We express yet again our solidarity with Cuba and demand the immediate implementation of the UN General Assembly Resolution on the lifting of the blockade.

- We denounce the military and oppressive regime in Burma and the recent brutal crackdown of the unrest, demanding the respect of democratic and civil rights and liberties and free elections.

- We express our serious concern about the situation in Pakistan, where we observe one more setback in the rights of the people to determine freely their future, under the recent state of emergency and the attack on the people

attention focused on outer space.

There have been certain important developments in the recent period, such as:

The NATO Summit meeting that took place in Riga in November 2006 officially ratified the organization's transformation into a global gendarme. It formalized its co-operation with Australia, New Zealand and Japan and officially abolished its 6,000 mile limit of activity. Thus, it is now preparing operationally to intervene all over the world. The dispatch of troops to the Middle East and Africa is already under discussion. A further expansion of NATO with the inclusion of the Western Balkans (Albania and FYROM), the Caucasus (Georgia) and Ukraine is being prepared, thus tightening the noose around Russia.

encountering the people's massive resistance in Japan, which the WPC salutes warmly. We will continue being active against the war plans in the region and the re-militarization of Japan.

One important factor in this situation is the expansion of the network of military bases all over the world by the USA — but also by other powers: The huge movement against the bases that is developing worldwide is promising.

With regard to nuclear arms, imperialist propaganda is attempting to mislead world public opinion concerning Iran. But as a matter of fact, it is the US — mainly — as well as other nuclear powers that are working intensively to produce the so-called "smart" nuclear weapons and a new generation of nuclear arms. In the same spirit we denounce the Indo-US nuclear agreement and salute the massive protests in the Indian society.

The WPC reaffirms its clear and principled position in favour of the complete abolition of all nuclear weapons in the world. At the same time we cannot close our eyes on who is the main and real threat against peace and security, who used first nuclear weapons and who dropped the commitment not to make use of the first strike. We cannot equal the responsibility of the aggressors and the victims. We are not in favour of nuclear tests and we consider them harmful, but at the same we condemn the "double moral and standards" of the US administration, which considers some of the states which hold nuclear weapons as allies and others as terrorists

Already from early in the nineties a systematic attempt had begun to revise the statutory principles of the UN and of international law as it took shape after the World War Two. The attempt is aimed at leaving the imprint of today's new world order on the UN and on all international organizations. At the same time, international agreements that moved in a positive direction have been undermined or denounced. Unfortunately, these objectives were met to a large degree in the UN reform of 2005 (details attached).

The overturning of principles of international law is expressed in many ways, for example:

- the adoption of an "European Constitution" (or reform treaty), in which pre-emptive war would be official EU policy.

- the elimination of boundaries for action by NATO and its transformation into a global organization (resolution taken at the Riga Summit.)

- the re-arming of Japan and the attempt to revise article 9 of its constitution

- the renouncing of the principle of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries, a matter that has even reached the point of a "Democracy Fund" being set up to fund such interference.

This new state of affairs means that the WPC must reconfirm its support for the statutory principles of the UN, its critical stance vis-a-vis the Security Council and its resolutions, its refusal to accept NATO and other military bodies as guarantors of peace,

continued on page 11

WPC WORLD ASSEMBLY AND THE WORLD PEACE CONFERENCE



April 8-13, 2008, Caracas, Venezuela

The rise and the intensity of imperialist aggressiveness and imperialism's need to impose its domination over the world are leading to intensified militarization and to an increase in armaments. The struggle of imperialist powers to divide up the markets, along with the change in the balance of power at the beginning of the nineties, has literally created a vicious circle. Whoever entertained illusions about an arms reduction and decreased militarization has been sadly disappointed.

The new state of imperialist domination has had an impact worldwide. The USA and NATO are escalating militarization and armaments so as to carry out their aggressive plans. The rest of the large imperialist powers do the same so that they can take part in the dividing up of the markets under better terms. Thus, the EU, in cooperation with NATO but also autonomously, is establishing new military forces. It is upgrading its arms industry. Russia is proceeding with the production of a new generation of weaponry and with military cooperation with other countries. Japan is rearming and revising its constitution. And other countries are following this same path for various reasons. Smaller countries either because they participate in imperialist coalitions or because they feel threatened. The result is, however, that today armaments have even gone beyond cold war levels. Monstrous new weapons systems are being developed, with

The EU is forming battle groups and planning to set up new naval groups for rapid intervention. It is preparing to send fresh troops to replace NATO troops in Kosovo. The new French President has asked for a new aircraft carrier and the Italian government has agreed to the expansion of the US base in Vicenza.

The USA and NATO are proceeding with the implementation of the missile defence shield. This is actually an offensive system that has triggered reactions from Russia and other countries and, mainly, the peoples' resistance. There have been substantial mobilizations in the Czech Republic and Poland. Movements in the EU oppose it universally.

Revision of the constitution Article 9 is

FOR A NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE ZONE ... (from p. 2)

taken into account in discussions for a treaty. This very fact could open new opportunities in Teheran to offer verifiable guarantees that their nuclear efforts are merely civil. For Israel, the fundamental advantage lies in the regional security treaty itself, the subscribing countries of which engage for pacific relations amongst each other. Could Israel ever dream of a better guarantee for its security preoccupations? Of course, this whole scenario is totally impossible without a fundamental solution for Palestine: an independent viable state.

The peace movements over the world could

change their defensive posture of "no war on Iran" into an offensive and positive campaign for political settlement in the Middle East. World public opinion could pressure political leaders to work in this direction.

The central question remains, however, as to whether the Western political leaders dare, can or are allowed to act in a direction that is the opposite of the actual real daily politics: continuing to isolate adversaries, always giving green light to friends, and saving their own nuclear strike capability.

Those who are working for a sustainable peace will one way or another have to change that policy. ■



Summary Report on the World Peace Council Regional Continental Meeting of the Americas Held at the National Assembly of the Venezuelan Parliament Caracas, Venezuela — August 25th and 27th 2007

The World Peace Council (WPC) regional continental meeting of the Americas was held in Caracas Venezuela August 25th and 27th 2007 at the National Assembly of the Venezuelan parliament. The meeting was called to discuss the current world and regional political situation, to establish a framework for continued work within the WPC in the coming year and to begin preparations for the WPC world summit to be convened in April 2008.

Venezuelan Comité de Solidaridad Internacional (COSI) hosted the meeting which was held in a spirit of revolutionary upsurge advancing within the Central and South American countries. In conjunction with the WPC meetings the 40th Anniversary celebrations of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) were also being held in Caracas. This provided a youthful and enthusiastic spirit throughout the meetings. Youth play an important and leading role in the socialist revolution in Venezuela and in the broader and growing international peace and anti-imperialist movement.

DAY ONE

COSI organized two tours for WPC delegates. The first explored some of the revolutionary changes occurring in Caracas. Visiting a barrio in Caracas and touring a state subsidized food distribution centre, a medical clinic, a computer centre for youth and children. The tour was conducted by the local communist party committee for socialist construction. The WPC delegates then visited a local community television station where we were interviewed. The community television and arts is enjoying growing state funding to compete with the private information sources. We then visited a very popular community radio station where we were interviewed again. There was great interest shown in the WPC delegation and the statements and positions of the WPC.

DAY TWO

Another tour was organized by COSI and the regional committee of the Communist Party of Venezuela to a small fishing village in the Venezuelan National Park located close to Porta Cruz which is approximately 370 kilometres east of Caracas to attend and hear Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez address the Venezuelan nation in his popular Sunday afternoon addresses and question and answer sessions.

The Venezuelan President greeted the WPC delegates one by one and read out the organizational affiliation. Chavez then proceeded to offer to host the 2008 WPC conference in Caracas with state support. This announcement was welcomed enthusiastically by WPC delegates. It was emphasized by the WPC Executive Secretary that this offer will go along way to ensure the success of the April 2008 WPC conference. All delegates were encouraged to begin immediate preparations for their organizations attendance.

DAY THREE

The WPC meeting of the regional continental Americas was convened at 9:00am Monday August 27th, 2007 in the National Assembly of the Venezuelan Parliament. Two sessions were held. The morning session heard greetings and messages of solidarity from all the organizations. Canada presented our official greeting (see Appendix A for full text) which was well received. The discussions focused on the international situation and the anti-imperialist fight back and the emergence of the world wide revolutionary socialist movement currently being led by Hugo Chavez and the revolutionary socialist forces in Central and South America.

The afternoon session centred on the practical tasks facing the WPC. Delegates heard a financial report, discussed the need for more communication and organizational efforts by the regional coordination, discussed questions of language in producing the Peace Messenger and stressed the need to minimize costly travel to meetings were electronic communications such as email, web sites, bulletin boards and web conference calls could be more effectively utilized.

In the evening a dinner was hosted by David Velásquez Interior Minister for Popular Participation and Social Protection. The dinner was attended by several deputies of the Venezuelan National Assembly and the Andean Parliament, executive members of the Communist Party of Venezuela and COSI members and peace supporters.

Main Plenum Discussions

The morning session of the WPC meetings was characterized by assessments of the world and regional peace forces and the role of these forces in the revolutionary socialist movements sweeping Central and South America. Special emphasis was placed on Venezuela's role as the leading anti-imperialist force and the need to strengthen the anti-imperialist fight back.

Venezuela

Fermin Toro President of COSI opened the main session with special greetings of solidarity with all the regional struggles for peace and social justice. He had special thanks for Hugo Morales for his help in the arrangements. He stressed the pride and importance of the fraternal relationship with the WPC and COSI. Toro noted that conditions are similar in all countries and forms the basis and conditions which unite all oppressed peoples and is the critical factor in the anti-imperialist fight back.

Cuba

Orlando Fundora President of WPC summarized the meetings of the WPC in Brazil and commented on the international military situation. Fundora noted the politics surrounding energy and the growing connection between oil consumption and the increasing belligerence of US imperialism. Fundora said, "Imperialism is soaking up the scientists of the world and putting them to task of developing new weapons and bio-fuel technologies." The question of bio-fuels Fundora said "puts the question of food production versus energy for cars centre stage." (The Canadian Peace Congress notes that for Canadian farmers this question is emerging in the form of the fight for the Canadian Wheat Board and corporate control of Canadian agricultural production, which will be diverted from food production to more profitable energy production.)

The WPC President also warned of the issue of water and the control by the large trans-national water corporations. Imperialism he said "is trying to monopolize the fresh water of the world." The CPC points to the Montebello SPP meetings in August which were in part to discuss Canada's capitulation for the bulk export of fresh water to the US. NATO poses a threat to world peace. Fundora made special emphasis that the sharpening European situation is due to the aggressive stance of US-NATO interference in the domestic affairs of European countries.

Fundora commented on the re-establishment of the Canadian Peace Congress as an important milestone and emphasized the importance of cooperation between continental organizations such as the US Peace Council, Canadian Peace Congress, MOVPAZ, Caribbean Peace organizations as essential in

strengthening peace forces in combating US imperialism in hemispherical revolutionary struggles now under way in Central and South America.

Special emphasis was placed on the leading role that Venezuela is playing in the world. Fundora said "The role of Venezuela is important because it signifies a break with chains of imperialism." All the actions of Venezuela are of peace, health and education for the peoples of Central and South America.

"The requirement to struggle against imperialism is of first rate importance" the WPC President noted. He indicated that because of the Venezuelan revolution imperialism is losing its position of world wide domination and that peace forces are gaining ground and are now becoming the "leading force" in the world. Venezuela has the same agenda as the world wide struggle for peace and is central in drawing new forces and alliances in this struggle.

Fundora emphasized the relevance of having the WPC meetings in Caracas. This is of particular importance in the face of Venezuelan President Chavez's announcement that the Venezuelan people will host the event. Fundora said "we are obligated to ensure success because of Chavez's support."

Mexico

Manuel Terraza Guerrero acting chair for the WPC meeting summarized the role of newly emerging forms of peace struggle on South America. He said "in Brazil and Argentina the peace movement is advancing because of these newly formed peace groups." After 50 years of the Cuban revolution in facing different processes of change, the strengthening of the Cuban peace movement is of critical importance as it forms the basis of the North American continental struggle for peace. It is the bulwark in the anti-imperialist fight back and directly challenges the false notion of the permanence of US imperialism.

Guerrero noted the difficulties in advancing the Mexican peace movement but said "Mexico is finding new forms of struggle to overcome this situation." He indicated that Mexican peace forces are building alliances between political parties and citizen movements and is working with children's and doctor's groups.

"On the whole," the Movimiento Mexicano por la Paz President said "there are more positives than negatives."

Argentina

Rina Bertaccini summarized the previous 2 years of peace work in Argentina as characterised by a dominant anti-imperialist content. She commented that Argentina is pursuing building alliances with other continental peace forces and seeing great progress in the anti-imperialist content of this work.

Bertaccini said "the founding in 1947 of the Argentinean peace movement with the WPC was large and broad in scope," she continued that given the current global realities "the original peace forces were correct in their anti-imperialist linkages to peace."

The importance of a conscious struggle against the enemies of peace is a requirement of the anti-imperialist fight back Bertaccini argues. She emphasized the need to overcome financial impediments to WPC work and to find new allies of peace.

In Argentina and South America it is very clear the direction that the peace movement is taking. It is one with a strong anti-imperialist content. The struggle to halt foreign military bases, primarily US military bases, is a reflection of the anti-imperialist content.

Central to this movement is the fight against US military academies.

Bertaccini rejected the "fight against terrorism" as a false struggle. A struggle she said "that deflects imperialist, first and foremost US, complicity in the militarisation of the world economies." She called for a special WPC meeting to discuss the politics of "US terrorism." This she said "will form the basis for a WPC policy against US terrorism."

Bertaccini closed by saying that "the only way forward is to work with all peace movements. The Central American political situation is complex but what they all have in common is the fight for social justice."

Dominican Republic

Juan Pablo Acosta García opened his remarks by acknowledging the special guest from Uruguay, Paraguay and Chile. García summarized the situation in the Caribbean and said much of the difficulty with the struggle for peace in this region is due to geography and languages.

He noted that of particular difficulty is "freedom of the press." He noted the critical situation in Haiti and noted that currently there is no WPC member from Haiti. Puerto Rico has had a peace council that has existed for many years and which is being re-activated.

Noting the "completely different" cultural realities between Haiti and the Dominican Republic the need to find new ways to work is critical for the development and strengthening of the peace movement in this region.

García called for a regional continental meeting of the Caribbean, USA, Mexico, Cuba and Canada to strengthen the revolutionary struggles of Central and South America.

Brazil

Rubens Diniz began his comments bringing attention to the importance of the struggles of revolutionary socialism underway in Venezuela. He emphasized the importance of the international defence of the socialist gains in Venezuela as part of the anti-imperialist struggle.

Diniz commented on the "different forms of propaganda" that the imperialists are assembling as the centre of its fight against socialist gains in Venezuela. He said that "fighting for peace is also a social justice fight. The fight for peace is a continuation of struggle and not one that can emerge only as new conflict arises," commented Diniz. He was drawing consideration to the world wide attention that the war in Iraq first aroused and then faded. This he said is of "particular interest to peace forces."

He raised the need to find new ways to maintain and continue the continuity for the struggle for peace. He said "precisely because there is an emergence of an anti-imperialist block of non-belligerent states that within this emerging block can this continuity be found."

He urged the WPC to find new ways to build solidarity with other peace forces and agreed that Chavez in the framework of the Venezuelan revolution "tasks that were previously prohibitive to the international peace movement can now occur." He stressed the need to emphasize neo-colonialism and elevate to greater visibility on the WPC agenda.

Canada

Canada reported briefly on the current political situation in Canada with the minority Conservative government led by PM Steven Harper as the leading force in the militarization of Canada. It was noted that the energy policies of the Harper neo-con government is the new central issue facing the peace forces.

continued on page 11



Canadian Public Opinion Solidly Against the US-NATO War in Afghanistan

Don Currie
Canadian Peace Congress

Canadian public opinion has swung decisively against the Afghanistan war policy of the Conservative Government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Rising casualties among Canadian troops deployed to the Kandahar region of Afghanistan, revelations of torture of Afghan detainees and the appalling death rate among Afghan civilians due to NATO bombing raids has hardened public opposition to the war. Testimony before the Senate foreign affairs committee in November 2007 revealed ongoing mismanagement of Federal Government aid funds assigned to reconstruction projects. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) manages a \$100 million fund for 2006-2007 part of a total Federal Government package of more than \$650 million for 2001-2009. The British based Senalis Council and Canadem, two non-governmental agencies involved with NGO's operating in Afghanistan provided testimony to the Senate hearing complaining that federal government funds are not reaching the Afghan people.

The daily cost of the war now exceeds \$3 million CDN and is expected to triple by February 2009 when the Canadian Parliamentary mandate to participate in the NATO led war expires and Canadian forces are supposed to be withdrawn. Prime Minister Harper refuses to commit to honoring the Parliamentary decision and has appointed former Liberal Foreign Affairs Minister John Manley, an architect of the Canadian armed forces combat role in the NATO-US War to defer a Parliamentary debate in the hopes of preventing a defeat of the Harper Government that would bring on a federal election where foreign policy and Canada US relations could become the major issue.

A media poll conducted from December 6-9, 2007 by the Strategic Counsel comprising Canada's most influential newspaper the Globe and Mail and a major private television network CTV, showed that if an election were called today 68 percent would vote against the Harper Government. In Quebec the anti-Harper opposition soars to 82 percent of committed voters who would vote against the Government. Sixty five percent of Canadians believe Canadian forces are in Afghanistan at the behest of the US Bush administration and because Canada is part of NATO. When asked what they considered to be the biggest threat facing the world 36 percent of Canadians polled listed climate change and global warming, another 11 percent cited the gap between rich and poor countries, 14 percent listed lack of respect for human rights, 11 percent considered American foreign policy to be the greatest threat facing the world and only 12 percent mentioned terrorism. The poll revealed that 39 percent of Canadians think that Canada's foreign policy is less independent than 50 years ago pointing to Canada's relationship with US as the principal cause of declining prestige internationally. Thirty three cent believe the Liberal Chretien Government's 'no' to the Bush administrations pressure to join in the war in Iraq to be Canada's greatest foreign policy achievement.

On top of the drop in public support for the Harper war policy is the explosive public hearings before the Parliamentary Ethics Committee investigating the ties between former Conservative Prime Minister Mulroney and Airbus International one of the

largest arms suppliers in Europe. Karl Heinz Schreiber, a Canadian lobbyist for Airbus, and who is presently awaiting extradition to Germany where he faces corruption charges, is alleged to have funneled money from Franz Joseph Strauss former Chancellor of Bavaria and head of Airbus, during the 1980's to bring Mulroney to power and back his campaign for a North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Airbus would then use Canada as a platform to market Airbus weaponry into the US market to compete with large US arms suppliers. Both Strauss and his employee Schreiber were ardent anti-communist opponents of the German Democratic Republic (the GDR) and had a big stake in inflaming the east-west arms race. The links between arms dealers and Government war policy is well known in Canada. Former Canadian Defense Minister Gordon O'Connor was forced to step down when it was revealed that he had been a defense department lobbyist for twenty years in partnership with high Canadian and US-NATO officers attempting to sell arms to

the Canadian military. O'Connor has been replaced by the current Defense Minister Peter McKay, also implicated indirectly in the Airbus scandal. The hearings are not over.

With scandal and falling public support dogging the Conservative Government, the only way the Harper Government can remain in power is disunity at the polls among pro-peace voters in the next federal election expected in early 2008. The three opposition parties the Liberals, New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Bloc Quebecois all have foreign policy positions formally opposing the war in Afghanistan and calling for Canadian withdrawal. Party leaders, Stephane Dion of the Liberals, Jack Layton of the NDP and Gilles Duceppe instead of launching a frontal attack bicker and seek electoral advantage instead of forging a clear opposition stance towards the Harper Government.

All opposition parties are under pressure from the 4 million strong organized labour movement, the Council of Canadians, the

largest civil society organization in Canada, rank and file members and supporters of the New Democratic, the Canadian Peace Alliance and the Canadian Peace Congress, the Communist Party and the Greens to defeat the war policies of the Harper Conservative Government.

Peace demonstrations calling for an end to the war were held across Canada last October 27 demanding the withdrawal of Canadian troops and a new mobilization is beginning for mass demonstrations in March 2008. Increasingly the slogans of the peace movement are demanding the defeat of the Harper Government. If the Harper Government is to be defeated and Canada's participation in the war in Afghanistan ended unity in action on the streets and at the polls will have to be lifted to a higher level. That is the challenge confronting the entire democratic left progressive and peace forces of Canada in the months leading up to the next federal election expected early in 2008. ■



Declaration of the 3rd General Assembly of Peace Association of Turkey

Istanbul — 18 November 2007

The Peace Association of Turkey convened its 3rd ordinary assembly on 18 November 2007, in Istanbul. The following declaration was discussed and accepted unanimously by the delegates from Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir branches of the association, as the final declaration of the assembly. One of the issues discussed in the assembly was the preparation for the European Regional Meeting of the World Peace Council and the "Middle East" Conference that will be held on 12-13 January, 2008 in Istanbul.

Declaration of the 3rd General Assembly of Peace Association of Turkey

In the 3rd General Assembly of the Peace Association convened on November 18, 2007, it was decided to keep on working actively on the following issues:

1. Peace Association of Turkey declares that the current peace movement should struggle against the worldwide imperialist aggression displayed by the USA and its European collaborators; and that more effort should be spent to prevent Turkey from taking part in this aggression.

2. The long term fundamental mission of the peace movement in Turkey is to prevent our country to be involved in a war. On this account, the Peace Association of Turkey opposes the sending of the Turkish Army outside the borders of the country for any reason and demands the return of all Turkish soldiers abroad, back home. For the same reason, Turkey should immediately end its membership to NATO, all foreign bases should be closed down and the usage and exploitation of the country's resources by the imperialist forces should be stopped.

3. Peace Association of Turkey will decipher the reasons and results of the escalation of militarism, which has deep effects on the society and also its close links with the imperialist plans; and will lead the peace movement against the militarization of the society.

4. We will not allow our people and country to be divided by 'nationalism' which is an inhuman ideology. The Peace Association of Turkey will provide all its effort to ensure that Turkish and Kurdish peoples live together in peace and to build up a 'working class patriotism' for peace against imperialism.

5. Peace Association of Turkey declares that it will stand against a military intervention of USA and its collaborators to Iran. The Peace Association will provide all its effort to act in solidarity with the people of Iran and to organize our people and intellectuals to stand against imperialist aggression.

6. Peace Association of Turkey aims at collaborating with anti-imperialist forces in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan and Lebanon that are resisting against occupation and war, at giving support to their struggle, at keeping these struggles on the agenda of the public opinion in Turkey and all over the world. The Association will establish closer relations with the forces in the Middle East, which resist against occupation and imperialist interventions and will organize campaigns in order to strengthen the fraternity and peace between the peoples of our region. It will do its best for the people of Turkey to perceive the developments in Middle East not as an issue of foreign policy but as a pretext to get the country involved in war.

7. The imperialist aggression in the Balkans, which resulted in the disintegration of Yugoslavia enters a new phase. The independence of Kosovo, as the first step of making up new governments directly controlled by imperialism and managed like a company, will ensure the presence of imperialism in the region and will constitute new obstacles for the establishment of peace. The Peace Association declares that the presence of imperialism in the Balkans should be ended immediately and that the Association will act in solidarity with Balkan peoples for this aim.

8. Worldwide nuclear armament continues to threaten humanity. Control over the researches on nuclear weapons of imperialist countries that possess nuclear weapons, especially USA and Israel, is not possible. On the other hand, imperialism imposes sanctions on some countries under the pretext that these countries try to possess nuclear weapons. The Peace Association declares that it is dead set against nuclear armament, that the double standard applied in nuclear armament control should be ended and that the international agreements carrying the resolution of eliminating nuclear weapons signed before Soviet Union was dissolved, should be executed.

9. Latin America as the centre of people's governments and ascents against imperialist aggression, gained importance in peace movement throughout the world. Peace Association declares that Cuba, above all, and Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil and other popular governments should be supported as well as the process of liberation on the continent.

10. Imperialist expansionism and rampant plunderage of capitalism leads the world to an environmental catastrophe that will have irreversible effects. The Peace Association declares that environmental problems are directly related with the peace movement throughout the world and that the Association will do its best to stop this process.



The European Union: An Obstacle Rather Than An Ally For Peace

Bert De Belder, Anti-Imperialist League/Stop USA, Belgium

The year 2007 has seen two new initiatives by the European Union to get its project back on track, after its Constitutional Treaty had been rejected in popular referenda in France and the Netherlands in mid-2005. The German presidency of the EU (first semester of 2007) ended with the pompous Berlin Declaration, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. And on December 13 in Lisbon, the new 'Reform Treaty' or Lisbon Treaty was signed, to replace the failed Constitutional Treaty.

What do these two recent documents, the Berlin Declaration and the Lisbon Treaty, tell us about the issue of peace? "The European Union wants to promote freedom and development in the world," the 2007 Berlin Declaration says. "We are committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the world and to ensuring that people do not become victims of war, terrorism and violence."

The peaceful resolution of conflicts? European military forces are or have until recently been active in the US-led imperialist wars of aggression and ensuing occupation in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan. The 27 EU Member States currently have 44,000 military personnel abroad, either on NATO, UN or EU missions (respectively taking up 70, 20 and 10 percent of the troops). In the Balkans, NATO's Kosovo force with 15,000 European troops can be reinforced by the 5,000 EU troops based in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the EU has also readied its 'Battle Group' concept, with two brigades of 1,500 troops each on standby. At its December 2007 Summit, the EU approved a 1,800 police force for Kosovo, not only against the will of Serbia, but also against international law, that clearly determines that Serbia continues to hold sovereignty over Kosovo (UNSC Resolution 1244 of 1999).

In Afghanistan, all European NATO members (23 countries) and 4 non-NATO EU Member States are contributing troops to the US-led occupation force, thus helping to free US troops for the occupation of Iraq. While several European countries were against the war on Iraq, the US-led 'Coalition of the Willing' initially contained troops from 15 current EU Member States. (8 of them have withdrawn since, basically because of the steadfastness of the Iraqi resistance and the protest at home.)

Europe's military actions and plans abroad reflect the ambiguous and sometimes changing situation of supporting and following the lead of the United States on the one hand, and wanting to build and project an own, European defense force on the other. In the main, Europe's big capital wants to provide itself with its own military means to protect its interests independently from the US. This was already clear at the time of the first Gulf War, in 1991. The European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT), which regroups 45 of the largest European transnational corporations, assessed Europe's role in the war in its document 'Reshaping Europe': "Europe had interests at stake in the Gulf, and it had ideas as what was to be done. But when the issue of using violence came up, Europe disposed neither of the decision-making mechanisms, nor of the means to possibly intervene." The NATO war against Yugoslavia confirmed this 'problem': European imperialism was not able to overthrow the nationalist resistance of Serbia by arms nor to get the spoils of war for itself. It had to appeal to the US to carry out the job.

The 1992 Maastricht Treaty had already introduced the EU pillar of a Common Foreign and Security Policy, but its implementation got slowed down because of contradictions among EU Members States and

because of US interference, through NATO. More detailed plans for the military build-up of the European Union were formulated at the Köln Summit of June 1999, immediately after NATO's war of aggression against Yugoslavia. Six months later, in Helsinki, the objectives were set as follows: "being able to deploy by 2003 a force of up to 60,000 personnel within 60 days, and to sustain it on the ground for at least one year, for the purposes of humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping and crisis management — including peace-making." All of these tasks mean intervention (far) beyond the borders of the European Union. None of them has any connection whatsoever to the defense of the territorial integrity of Europe. The Treaty intends to impose an offensive military intervention policy, which is in opposition to most Member States' national Constitutions, which stipulate that the armed forces are confined to the defense of the national territory.

Since September 11, 2001, a number of other aspects related to the so-called 'war on terror' are increasingly on the security agenda of the EU. These include repressive measures in the form of judicial, financial, police and intelligence action against a number of persons and organisations lumped together on a supposed "terrorist list," containing legitimate people's, revolutionary and communist forces such as the ELN and the FARC of Colombia, the New People's Army and the Communist Party of the Philippines, the Palestinian Hamas and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, among others. EU sanctions are in place against some 26 countries. Here again, the EU follows the lead of the US. Worse even, the improvement of security inside the European Union is "regularly being discussed with external partners such as the United States," according to an official EU web site.

The new Lisbon Treaty obliges the Member States to "undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities" (TEU, Article 27). It is quite a unique feature in the history of international treaties that a treaty contains the obligation to spend more for the military. It is the only article of the entire Treaty that encourages public expenditure, as opposed to sectors such as health care and education.

The Treaty reaffirms the European Union's adherence to NATO obligations: "Commitments and cooperation in this area shall be consistent with commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which, for those States which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation." (TEU, Article 27-7) This idea is also dear to Belgian Prime Minister Verhofstadt, who declared before the Belgian Chamber of Representatives in September 2006 his love for a European 'defense identity', "not separate from NATO but as a pillar of NATO." He sees the Belgian military mission with UNIFIL in South Lebanon as "an important step in developing that European defense identity and that European defense pillar, within the framework of the Atlantic alliance as a whole."

The new Treaty further expands the concept of military interventions abroad, outside the EU borders, to "include joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking, and post-conflict stabilisation," adding that "all these tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories" (TEU, Article 28). With

this article, European military forces may intervene in any country to interfere directly in internal armed conflicts, under the guise of combating terrorism. The regions where EU forces may want to militarily intervene, are hinted at in a paper of the European Defence Agency: "European security interests may be directly or indirectly challenged by tensions arising not only in the near neighbourhood but also further afield.... By 2025, Europe will be externally dependent for 90% of its oil and 80% of its gas. China and India will drive global energy demand and seek new sources in Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East."

The new Treaty of the European Union plans the further expansion of this European Defense Agency (EDA), established in 2004, to implement "any measure needed to strengthen the industrial and technological base of the defence sector" (TEU, Article 27-3). In fact, the defense industry has co-authored this Treaty article, as nearly all of the thirteen external experts consulted by the Defence Working Group to prepare the Treaty have connections with the European military-industrial complex (BAE Systems, EADS, Thales and other armaments companies). The EU itself admits that it wants to support the European defense industry: "While recognising the strategic role of the European defense related industries, these are left without support in fragmented markets." At a European Defense Agency conference early this year, EU Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry Günter Verheugen announced a multiplication of the EU budget for security research, with an increase "by more than 13 times, from 15 to 200 millions euros per year."

The African continent, nearby and mainly consisting of former colonies, is the preferred playing ground for European military action. While mainly France and Britain have their own, quite extensive networks of military bases, military assistance agreements and defense pacts with various African countries, also the European Union as such is becoming more active in Africa. A case in point is the 2007 agreement on the sending of EU troops to Chad and the Central African Republic, under the pretext of protecting civilians from the spill-over violence from neighbouring Sudan.

The EU has adopted a new EU-Africa Joint Strategy at the EU-Africa Summit in December 2007, establishing, among other things, an African Peace and Security Architecture. The latter will go hand in hand with a Trade and Regional Integration for the "improvement of economic governance and investment climate in Africa" — detailing, just to make things clear, that this concerns "private sector development, supported by foreign investments." New issues such as energy and migration are high on the agenda. Of course, the fast-growing relations between China and Africa are a major reason behind Europe's military activities there.

If peace and trade go hand in hand, who stands to benefit? "We all know that where the EU commits itself, it wants to get advantages", says Swedish captain Lennart Danielson, head of the EU Staff Group at NATO headquarters in Belgium (SHAPE). And he gives the example of the Congo, which "has a major impact on the economy, because of the many natural resources in the region. If the region becomes more stabilised, it will be beneficial to our trade relations with Africa." German Defense Minister Franz-Joseph Jung echoed this statement by arguing that "the stability in this region, rich in natural resources, would be profitable for German industry." The EU deployed already two military missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2003, the EU launched Operation Artemis in the East of Congo, and in the period of the July 2006 elections, the EU deployed the EUFOR mission.

As a conclusion, when it comes to peace, the European Union cannot be considered a valuable alternative to the US. For that would mean replacing one imperialism — that of the US — by another, seemingly more civilized one — that of the EU. Or the replacement of one class of exploiters by another one. It is one thing to cleverly take advantage of the contradictions between different imperialist forces in order to bring the people's struggles forward. It is an entirely different matter to have illusions in the EU's self-declared intentions to bring about peace — or democracy and development, for that matter.

This article is based on a paper presented by the author at the XIVth International Conference on European Studies in Havana, Cuba, 27-30 November 2007. ■

CANADIAN PEACE CONGRESS PREPARES FOR WPC CARACAS WORLD ASSEMBLY

The Interim Executive of the Canadian Peace Congress, following the report of Sean Currie Congress delegate to the August WPC Regional Meeting in Caracas has begun the work of organizing a Congress delegation to the April 2008 World Assembly of the World Peace Council. The Canadian Peace Congress upon receiving the official documents of invitation from WPC and COSI, the host organization, will circulate them and begin the work of organizing a Congress delegation to attend the WPC Executive Meeting, and send a broad representative delegation of peace, labour and democratic activists to attend the World Assembly and Day of Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution and the people of Venezuela. Special attention will be given to organizing youth to attend the event.

Report back meetings of the decisions of the August Caracas Regional Meeting of WPC have been organized by the Edmonton Peace Council, the Regina Peace Council and the newly formed Fraser Valley Peace Council in Vancouver BC where the WPC World Assembly was discussed and work begun on organizing a representative delegation. Report was also made to the Nelson BC Peace Coalition, evoking keen interest in the WPC event in Caracas.

In other work, the Congress Interim Executive has opened up discussions on a draft call to an Extraordinary Renewal Convention to be convened following the WPC World Assembly in Caracas next April. The call will be accompanied with a new draft constitution and program of action.

Canadian Peace Congress Council's participated in the Canadian Peace Alliance sponsored October 27th mobilizations for peace under the slogans of Canada Out of Afghanistan, US Out of Iraq, Hands of Iran, and Bring the Troops Home Now.

The Congress is working on a new website and is reviewing plans for an all-Canada Congress publication.

The 2007 Japan Peace Conference in Okinawa

The 2007 Japan Peace Conference was held for four days from November 22, 2007 in Naha City in Okinawa (an island of south Japan). More than 1,000 peace activists from across the country took part in the conference.

Under the slogan: "For the Abrogation of Military Alliance and the Removal of Military Bases," the Conference has been held annually since 1986, by the Organizing Committee composed by Japan Peace Committee and other around 50 organizations including trade unions, peace and solidarity organizations, women and youth.

The Conference took place amidst the increased international isolation of the US policy of aggression and oppression, while the movement and public opinion against U.S. bases and U.S. military presence are gaining significant ground in different parts of the world. In March 2007, the International Conference for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases was held in Ecuador for the first time in history, which resulted in the establishment of an international network against military bases. The struggles to oppose military bases were also emphasized in the Counter-Forum on the G8 Summit held in Rostock, Germany.

In Japan, particularly after the landslide defeat of ruling Liberal Democratic Party led coalition in the election of the House of Councilors last July, situation has been dramatically changing, in which people got the conviction that public opinion could move the politics.

Among others, the withdrawal of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force, having been dispatched to the Indian Ocean to help the US military operations in Afghanistan, was an historic achievement of public opinion and movement. It was the Japanese public that has enforced the Maritime Self-Defense Force ships to stop its mandate in Indian Ocean.

In Iwakuni (expansion of air base), Yokosuka (deployment nuclear-powered aircraft carrier), Zama (relocation of an army headquarter from US mainland), Henoko (constructing a new marine base), Takae (new heliport for marine), local people have been working, together with their local governments, in opposition to the ongoing realignment and reinforcement of US military forces and construction plans for a new base. The realignment of U.S. forces in Japan is clearly aimed at turning Japan into a stronghold of the US in its preemptive attack strategy.

US Defense Secretary Robert Gates in a recent interview with the *Asahi Shimbun* (Japanese daily newspaper) expressed his strong concern over the implementation of the realignment plan by saying, "If you start pulling at one thread, then I worry that the whole thing will come unraveled." The conference called on participants to pull "threads" and defeat the realignment plan with nationwide solidarity.

It was also significant that in Okinawa, where the people of the entire prefecture are involved in the struggle against the government's decision to delete the reference from school textbooks to the responsibility of the Japanese military for forcing the local people to commit "mass suicide," the peace movements of Japan and other parts of the world met.

The Conference made a call to bring back the Japanese Self-Defense Force from Iraq, largely increase the movement in opposition to adverse revision of the peaceful Constitution, and form a majority of the public that favors the abrogation of the Japan-US Security Treaty.

International Symposium

The International Symposium, as a part of the Conference, was held on November 22-23, 2007. On the panel were Geov Parrish, executive director of the Washington Peace Action, USA; Paulina Elizabeth Ponce Cando, International Network for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases — Ecuador/ head of the communication affairs of the human rights watch section of the Ecumenical Commission of Human Rights, Ecuador; Andrea Licata, PhD, Committee of Inhabitants and Workers of East Vicenza — Against the Construction of a New Base in Vicenza — For the Conversion of Camp Ederle to Civil Uses, Italy; Ko You Kyoung, Bureau Chief, Campaign for Eradication of Crimes by US Troops in Korea, Republic of Korea; and Tadaaki Kawata, Executive Board Member, Japan Peace Committee.

The Chief of the Department of Base Affairs, Ginowan City Government (where US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma is situated) of Okinawa Prefecture was also presented at the Symposium and made a special reports.

The Symposium made clear that despite the serious damage caused by the US military presence, including crimes and environment pollution, and the danger of the US world strategy, the US attempt to dominate the rest of the world by military force has met with strong resistance in many parts of the world. The participants had interactive discussion on how to promote public opinion and cooperation, on advocacy for the conversion of military bases for civilian use, and on creative ideas and experiences in the movement.

Geov Parrish reported that in the United States, the movement against the Iraq war has created a historically unusual change in the public opinion, and that the bigger challenge would be to change the politics. He stressed the importance of supporting those who refuse to serve in the war in Iraq, of developing public opinion through non-violent resistance to prevent weapons and equipment from being sent to Iraq, and of mobilizing people through students' resistance against military recruitment activities.

Paulina Ponce spoke of her experience of the movement against the military base in Manta, one of the US forward operating location, through making it known to the public the impact of the military presence and the role of the base as foothold of the US domination of Latin America. Pointing out future tasks of the international network as establishing an international coordinating committee, organizing international campaigns, she called for cooperation and solidarity for a world without foreign military bases.

Andrea Licata reported on the struggle against the US base in Vicenza, Italy, which is planned to be expanded. The successful 200,000 people rally was held in February 2007. He cited concrete examples from Germany and East Europe of the conversion of military bases for civilian use and stressed that the removal of military bases is a challenge for the people and community also from the sake of employment and economy. He pointed to the importance of revealing the fact that the base is being used for preemptive attacks.

Ko You Kyoung made clear that while some part of the US military bases in South Korea has been returned according to the its realignment plan, the rest are being expanded and being strengthened. She referred to the contamination problem in the former base sites, saying that more and more Korean people are calling on the US to take the responsibility for cleaning up such area. She also said that heinous crimes of brutality such as sexual crimes and arson committed by US military personnel in Korea are increasing.

Kawata Tadaaki, having referred to the achievement in removing JSDF from the war in Afghanistan, emphasized the importance of international solidarity of peace and anti-base movements, based on the struggles of residents and local governments. He pointed out the

importance of international cooperation and exchanges for eradicating US military crimes and achieving a development of local economy by removing bases. He also stressed that the struggles against US bases is a part of the global effort to achieve a just world, in which broader joint actions could be possible.

Through the discussion, the symposium made clear the struggles waged in different countries and regions were important not only for their respective places, but were integral part of the global struggle to reject the domination by big powers and to create a peaceful and just world order. It showed the importance to globalize joint actions and solidarity in opposition to US military bases, and to open up a new horizon for creating a foreign bases — free and peaceful world and Asia.

Human Chain around the US Marine Base

As part of the conference, about 1,300 people on November 25 formed a human chain encircling US Marine Corps Camp Schwab in Nago City where the government is planning to construct a new US base (on Henoko Seashore). Not only the conference participants but local residents that have been waging a struggle for more than ten years against US base construction participated.

Main Conference and Workshops

Following the international symposium, a main conference was held on 23 November in Naha City Hall with 1,000 participants. In the main conference, Japan Peace Committee Sec-

retary General Chisaka Jun made the keynote speech in which he called on the participants to drive the Japanese and U.S. governments into a corner with further achievements of the movement and the new political situation. He called for further actions in opposition to the new anti-terrorism special measures bill and adverse revision of the Constitution. He also stressed the need to block the realignment of US forces in Japan, to undo the government textbook screening policy on "mass suicide" during the Battle of Okinawa, and to thoroughly uncover the defense scandal.

The conference focused efforts on the issue of "mass suicides" at the end of WW II. A survivor of "mass suicides" testified from his own experience that it occurred when he was six years old. He revealed that his mother shouted at his elder brother, "Throw away the grenade!" and his family narrowly escaped death, he said.

In a symposium on "mass suicides," Okubo Yasuhiro of the Okinawa Peace Committee stressed that behind the distortion of history of Okinawa is the scheme of the Japanese and US governments to discourage Okinawans' wishes for peace and to strengthen the military alliance.

In a separate symposium on "municipalities, residents and U.S. bases," representatives of movements in opposition to the realignment plan in Iwakuni and Zama cities as well as the JCP made reports. The movement in Yokosuka City in opposition to the deployment of a US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier also joined in the discussion. ■

AGORA FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

European Parliament — Brussels, 8-9 November 2007
Position presented by Skevi Koukouma — WIDF Vice President

We are gathered here at this crucial moment in order to discuss the future of Europe. It is clear that this is an effort to show that there are democratic procedures in promoting the approval of the Treaty, considering AGORA as a consultation process of the NGO's and further more the people of Europe.

Subsequently, we cannot avoid talking about the political framework and content of the revised Constitutional Treaty, as well as the way in which this is going to be adopted, after the decisions of the EU Council meeting in Lisbon.

The European Office of WIDF denounces the real and stated goal of the current reform of the European Union treaties, which is to recover the essential content of the previously rejected draft constitutional treaty, whilst at the same time seeking to avoid a democratic debate and the expression of the peoples will, namely through referendums.

This attempt is unacceptable and is a profound disrespect for democracy and for the sovereign will, expressed in 2005 by the French and Dutch people.

If it were to be ratified in the various countries, this treaty should have been directed towards a qualitative leap in the configuration of the European Union and not strengthening as an economic, political and military block contrary to the interests of the workers and the peoples.

This treaty constitutes a new step towards the institutionalisation of neo-liberalism, the promotion of militarism and a stronger domination by the capital and the leading great powers of the European Union already implemented by the cornerstone of the EU institutions, the Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice Treaties and several neo-liberal policies such as the Lisbon Strategy.

The policies to be implemented by the draft treaty at hand will further jeopardise the economic and social rights of the women's and the peoples generally; through the liberalisation of markets, the primacy of competition and monetarist policies serving the interests of the big economic and financial groups, for example by dismantling and privatising public services and not taking into account the real needs generated by growth and unemployment.

Additionally, this treaty promotes the militarisation of the European Union within the framework of NATO and in coordination with the USA, an increase in military spending, an arms race and the militarisation of international relations in general.

From all mentioned above it becomes evident that this Treaty does counter the interest and aspiration of the women's and peoples of Europe. This is why we say No both to the new Treaty and to the antidemocratic process through which it is tried to be imposed. It is our demand that the right of each people to have their say on a treaty which has such profound consequences for the present and the future of each of their countries is upheld.

It is our demand that the participation of the peoples of Europe in a process affecting their lives is guaranteed, through a broad and democratic debate and through the expression of the popular will.

With full confidence in the possibility of a different Europe, a Europe of cooperation, of real economic and social progress and peace, WIDF and its national organisations in European countries, we state that we will focus our work in our countries on actions against the adoption of this Treaty. The reform treaty must be brought to referendum in all the EU member states, following broad and democratic popular debates.

Africa Under Further Menace of Resource Wars

Rui Namorado Rosa, President, CPPC — Portugal

Africa supports a population of about 900 million people, living in about 50 countries, many of which are somewhat artificial constructions inherited from the European colonial administrations set up in the XIX century.

The social structure of the Continent is one of extremes, from deprived populations, many facing famine, disease and turbulence, to the wealthy elites and war lords supported by colonial or neo-colonial economic or military connections, whose income they derive from the exploitation of natural resources from which huge profits are extract by trans-national corporations.

Africa is a prime producer of some mineral raw materials of great industrial importance. To name just a few commodities of greater economic and technological value, and their larger producers in the continent to the world market: Hydrocarbons (in Libya, Nigeria, Algeria and Angola); Diamonds (in Botswana, R.D. Congo, R. South Africa and Angola); Gold (R. South Africa, Ghana, Mali, Tanzania); Platinum group metals (R. South Africa); Tantalum and Niobium (R. South Africa, Mozambique, Rwanda); Uranium (Niger, Namibia); Phosphate (Morocco, R. South Africa, Tunisia); Copper (Zambia, R. South Africa, R.D. Congo, Botswana).

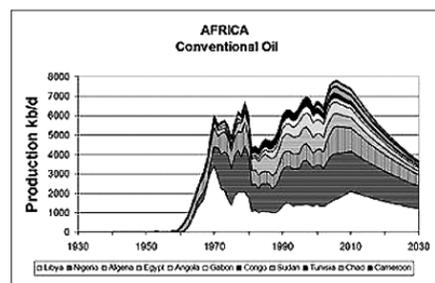
As to hydrocarbons (crude oil and natural gas), Africa holds about one tenth of the world's reserves of petroleum and natural gas, and is currently delivering nearly one tenth of the world's annual production. The past and forecast production of conventional oil in the continent add up to an ultimate oil production estimated of nearly 180 Gb (billion barrels), of which nearly half has been produced up to know, the remaining half been left to be produced in the future. The four principal producers are Libya, Nigeria, Algeria and Angola, which are all members of OPEC, together holding more than 80% of the estimated future production of the continent. Other producers, in decreasing order of shares, are Egypt, Gabon, R.P. Congo, Sudan, Tunisia, Chad and Cameroon.

Production commenced in the 1930s, grew rapidly in the 1960s as major fields in Libya came on stream. Production was then reinforced by Nigeria and Algeria, supplemented by smaller producers, in the 1970s. There was an overall early peak of production in 1979, then production fell sharply in the wake of the second oil shock, due to OPEC quota constraints, before recovering and attaining an overall peak of 7.8 Mb/day (million barrels a day) in 2006. Future production is ex-

pected to decline at about 3% a year, to about half that level by 2025.

Africa also holds substantial additional deepwater resources in the Guinea Gulf, especially off the coasts of Angola and Nigeria, which are at an early stage of depletion. This production is expected to grow rapidly to peak around 2012 at 4 Mb/day, and decline steeply afterwards to near exhaustion by 2030.

Africa also holds substantial natural gas deposits in Algeria, Nigeria, Egypt and Lybia, plus some minor reservoirs elsewhere. Total gas reserves are equivalent to about 46 Gb, the larger in Algeria, which currently produces at a rate of 560 Mb/year. The related production from gas



Source: Regional Assessment – Africa, ASPO Newsletter, no. 68, August 2006

liquefaction plants (LNG) is expected to increase to attain a plateau of about 1.3 Mb/day from 2020 onwards.

Taken together, the total production of all liquids (conventional and deepwater oil and liquefied natural gas) is expected to reach a peak of about 12 Mb/day around 2012, but then fall rapidly to about half that level by 2025.

As to oil consumption, it has grown five-fold from 1965 to almost 2.5 Mb/day in 2006. Per capita consumption stands at about one barrel per year, which is extremely low when compared with industrialized countries (that is at least ten times higher). Accordingly, one expects Africa will go on being a net exporter until 2030, albeit at an ever decreasing rate. As such, Africa attracts the eager attention of oil dependent powers, namely the European Union, the USA and R.P. China.

On the other hand, African oil-importing countries face mounting challenges as a result of world's dwindling oil supplies and growing oil prices. The hardest hit are the poorest. For instance, Senegal's budget deficit doubled in 2006, inflation accelerated and growth slowed down, as oil price increased in the international market, and the state-owned petrochemical industry was forced to shut down for long periods.

Were Africa to attain a fourfold increase of its present average income level, to reach a middle income level by world standards, and it would absorb all

its hydrocarbons' production capacity, becoming then unable to export them to the world market. So that Africa is eyed by imperialism as being simultaneously very rich (in natural resources) and extremely poor (in people's living standard), a regrettable combination that nevertheless is the origin of the surpluses that are exported to the world market, feeding the consumerism of rich countries and the profits of the trans-national corporations, at the expenses of present level of living of Africans and compromising the future industrialization of the continent.

Between 1965 and 1999 there were seventy-three civil wars in the world, almost all driven by the capital greed to control natural resources such as oil, diamonds, copper, and so on. It is realized that countries relying on one or two major export have more than a one-in-five chance of civil war, a proportion far higher than in countries with a broad spectrum of foreign trade. One realizes how highly specialized economies, based on either intensive or mono-cultural agriculture or over-exploitation of certain mineral resources, focused at serving foreign interests, tend to corrupt ruling elites and divert human and material resources from the economic activities that satisfy most social necessities, depriving the population at large from their basic needs. Resource wars with their devastating impacts on civilians have become common along the XX century. Many of these were in Africa.

Nearly every country in Africa is a case study in this list of sinister examples. Africa bleeds, notwithstanding its abundant wealth, constrained by the world financial

USA's hegemonic control so far. A recent tour by Iranian President to seven African countries, followed by the announcement of oil development agreements between the National Iranian Oil Company with the Nigeria counterpart and the Ivory Coast, are a sign of this. As it is the active economic cooperation policy entertained by R.P. China in developing infrastructures and resources in several countries, on bilateral basis and via the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, convened by China and the African Union. But the USA has designated West African oil resources as constituting a national strategic interest since 2001. And the European Union is attempting to strengthen its economic links to the continent, profiting from the foothold acquired by the former colonial powers there, of which the November 2007 summit between the European and the African Unions was a token but also a sign of growing African assertiveness, for which the broadening global competition for investment and trade added support.

The recently announced United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) is a new military headquarters devoted solely to Africa, the result of an internal reorganization of the USA military command structure that officially will respond for the military relations with the African countries. Some African leaderships were led to view AFRICOM as an opportunity. The USA has already been offered Liberia to host AFRICOM, and is looking at Sao Tome and Principe, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Djibouti, and Ethiopia as possible locations, while having secured access agreements with Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Gabon and Namibia. In the front and wake of this imperialist move, some African nations are receiving significant military aid and weapons sales; most of these gone to oil-rich and compliant states.

AFRICOM means the official acknowledgement by the USA of Africa's growing strategic importance; it also demonstrates the way the ageing hegemonic power sees the exercise of its influence in attaining its economic and geo-strategic objectives. Financial and technological competition can both serve capital interests of all parties and exasperate their inherent contradictions, bringing in the menace of "military solutions." Which part the multitude of military installations and combat groups will play to secure the capital interests of the USA and the EU? Which part proxy warfare might play again on African soil? The competition for resources is unfolding across Africa as in the past, but the depletion and upcoming scarcity of energy, soil and water, and essential commodities for sustaining the "economic growth" in the "developed world," threatens anew with old and novel fashions of resource wars.

The present rush for African natural resources to be exported might turn out to be a no return way, given that Africa will thus become dispossessed of those scarce resources that would be essential to its future economical development, such as hydrocarbons — crude oil and natural gas. African countries see the viability of evolving to higher stages of development, including added industrial value to their own raw-materials, becoming strongly undermined. Along the timeline, there is a window of opportunity that opened right upon the national liberation and with de-colonization, but that is now about to close again. Will Africa have its future denied? ■



Source: The Beginning of the Oil End Game featuring original FTW maps, Michael C. Ruppert, From the Wilderness, January 25, 2005

institutions' rulings, explored and looted by neo-colonial foreign investment, by open or disguised interference in the form of foreign humanitarian aid or aid for development, or straight on violence fed by foreign weapons in exchange for essential raw-materials or precious materials.

Africa is likely to suffer continued conflict in the short term, given Africa's undeveloped reserves of a number of highly prized mineral commodities. Moves by a number of outside political powers, beyond the ex-colonial European countries, have developed within the last decade in an accelerated fashion. The evolving African map of external connections and investment deals shows clearly the rate at which the world's main protagonists begun playing the end game for oil and others scarce raw-materials, on which modern economy is most dependent.

Explored and neglected Africa still appears as an open continent in the eyes of the world powers. It had escaped major

ON BRUTAL ASSASSINATION OF BENAZIR BHUTTO

All India Peace & Solidarity Organisation Press Release
December 28, 2007

The All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation (AIPSO) expresses its profound shock and deep outrage at the heinous assassination of Ms. Benazir Bhutto, the leader of the Peoples Party in Pakistan. Taking place less than two weeks before the elections, this is an obvious attempt to derail the transition to democracy that Pakistan is attempting. It is not only an attack on the democratic process in Pakistan but it also poses a serious threat for the entire region.

The AIPSO strongly condemns this attack. Clearly there are forces who are seeking to destabilise Pakistan and not allow the transition to democracy to succeed. All the peace loving people in the world must join hands with the people of Pakistan to ensure that such disruptive efforts are thwarted.

The AIPSO also conveys its heartfelt condolences to Ms. Benazir Bhutto's family and People's Party of Pakistan. The AIPSO assures the people of Pakistan of its solidarity with them in their hour of grief.

Canadian Imperial Ambitions and BMD — The Energy Connection

Sean Currie, Edmonton Peace Council

The Edmonton Peace Council is a member of the provincial organizations of the Canadian Peace Congress. Edmonton is the capital city of the province of Alberta which is now rapidly becoming the driving engine of the Canadian economy. Edmonton sits in what is known in Alberta as the "Industrial Heartland."

The Industrial Heartland area is the central processing, distribution and upgrading centre for the massive Tar Sands mining operations in Alberta 500 km north of Edmonton in Ft. McMurray where bitumen is extracted from the oily sand and upgraded into heavy oils. The mining operations cover 100 of thousands of hectares of land.

Edmonton is rapidly expanding its industrial footprint and is becoming a central hub of rail, pipeline, and industrial fabrication and processing infrastructure for Canada's export of resources to Asia and US markets.

Canada's New Industrial Power Base — Tar Sand Oil

Once the tar sand is excavated and loaded into giant 400 ton mining trucks it is hauled to massive crushers where it is combined with steam and diluents and processed into slurry. Processing of the tar sands requires massive volumes of water, natural gas and electricity. The slurry is then transported via pipelines to upgraders that are located in Ft. McMurray and "The Industrial Heartland" — Edmonton. The "upgraders" are the single largest consumers of water, natural gas and electricity in Alberta and the largest emitters of CO₂ and toxic metals in the form of tailings which are dumped in large pits the size of small lakes.

The size of these industrial projects has been compared to the modern day undertaking of the Great Wall of China. They are large industrial projects each taking millions of man-hours to construct, consuming tons of steel, copper and plastics. A typical project will require 4000 trades personnel to build with some of the largest requiring 10,000 or more.

Currently there is more than \$250 billion in proposed expansion taking current production from approximately 1.2 million barrels of heavy oil a day to 5 million by about 2030. All of the oil produced (99%) goes via an enormous and intricate networks of pipelines to US refineries for final processing. Much of the production goes in to military fuels specially designed for the US Air Force and the US Navy. Most of the refinery facilities that Alberta heavy oil is transported to are located in Illinois and Oklahoma. It is then transported to the large refineries of Texas. There are now discussions occurring that will take the raw bitumen directly to Texas through new pipelines.

The majority of Canadian finance and industrial capital is now "underwritten" by the "equity" in Canada's tar sands. The US Department of Energy's Energy Information Agency (EIA) 2006 annual report shows that "North America" is 2nd in global crude oil reserves at 317 billion barrels. North America follows the Middle East which accounts for 743 billion barrels. In a foot note to the North American reserves the report says that Alberta's tar sands account for 174 billion barrels or 55% of the total known "North American" reserves. The US is the largest single national consumer of oil at approximately 25 million barrels per day. The largest single consumer in the world is the US military which sucks up 400,000 barrels per day, the US Air Force accounts for 40% of all US military consumption.

It is in this context that Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper finds his support base and his desire to make Canada an "Energy Superpower."

Canadian Imperialist Policy — Driven by Oil

The Harper Conservative Government came to power January 23rd 2006 with 33% of the popular vote to form a minority government representing those sections of finance capital concentrated in the energy sector. The basic mandate of the Harper Government is to protect first, the power and privileges of all those who derive their profits from the wealth generated by processing and export of Canadian oil and natural gas reserves to the US market.

The US military is heavily reliant on Canadian imports of oil. According to the US Defense Energy Support Center Fact Book 2004, in Fiscal Year 2004, the US military (Department of Defense DoD statistics) list military fuel consumption as increasing to 144 million barrels. This is about 40 million barrels more than the average peacetime military usage. 144 million barrels makes 395 000 barrels per day, almost as much as daily energy consumption of Greece. The DoD's total primary energy consumption in Fiscal Year 2006 was 1100 trillion Btu. It corresponds to only 1% of total energy consumption in USA that represents the total energy consumption of Nigeria, with a population of more than 140 million. The DoD per capita energy consumption (524 trillion Btu) is 10 times more than per capita energy consumption in China, or 30 times more than that of Africa.

October 29, 2007 in Ottawa, Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute (CDFAI) sponsored their annual foreign policy conference entitled "Canada as the Emerging Energy Superpower: Testing the Case." The conference looked at Prime Minister Harper's claim that Canada is an "emerging energy superpower." It addressed some questions such as Life as an Energy Superpower, Implications for Canada-US Relations, Critical Energy Infrastructure Protection, and Energy, Environment and the Arctic. Jim Prentice Minister of Industry and Gary Lunn Minister of Natural Resources were keynote speakers.

On July 14th 2006 in a speech to the Canada-U.K. Chamber of Commerce on the eve of the 2006 St. Petersburg G8 summit Prime Minister said, "One of the primary targets for British investors has been our booming energy sector. They have recognized Canada's emergence as a global energy powerhouse — the emerging 'energy superpower' our government intends to build."

In a follow up speech on September 20th 2007 to the Economic Club of New York Harper said, "Canada is an emerging energy superpower, the only stable and growing producer of this scarce commodity in an unstable world. Our strong and robust economy, with its enormous energy potential, represents a tremendous opportunity for American business and a crucial element of continental energy security. And given the deep integration of our own economies, these global challenges and opportunities call for a continental response."

Canadian foreign policy is characterized by the dominant transnational oil monopolies exploiting the Canadian oil reserves. These companies are involved in the mining, upgrading and transportation of bitumen to US refineries and downstream processing facilities.

Canadian Mining Capital as Central American Imperial Power Broker

PM Harper's recent tour of Haiti, Columbia and Chile was a play to position Canadian mining and banking interests as dominant hemispherical players and to situate Canada as a regional imperial power broker.

While on his July tour of the region Har-

per made stops at Barrick Gold's head quarters in Santiago and stopped at Scotia Bank to glad hand. In his July 17th 2007 speech to the Chile-Canada Chamber of Commerce in Santiago Chile, Prime Minister Harper indicated that Canada is willing to become a bigger player in the region and "to doing so for the long term." Harper said, "Foreign direct investment from Canada into the Americas now stands at close to 100 billion dollars — a number that is more than twice the size of Canadian investment in Asia."

This places Canada 3rd in direct foreign investment in the Caribbean and Latin America with banking and mining as the dominant players. Harper also expressed Canadian energy capital is ready to supply energy to South American markets and that Canada is prepared to challenge Venezuela in reversing the "return to the syndrome of economic nationalism, political authoritarianism and class warfare." Harper's thinly veiled warning to South American workers to abandon a path of independent socialist development and return to capitalist relations pleases his mining bosses.

Harper said, "Canada is an emerging energy superpower and is committed to working with you in addressing this challenge."

Canada's dominant position in mining is described by Mandeep Dillon in the April 20, 2007 Canadian Mining Watch report entitled "Canadian Mining in Mexico: Made in Canada Violence" as, "Canadian mining corporations lead the global mining industry."

Dillon cites that, "The Canadian industry ranks first in the global production of zinc, uranium, nickel and potash; second in sulphur, asbestos, aluminium and cadmium; third in copper and platinum group metals; fourth in gold; and fifth in lead. It has interests in over 8,300 properties worldwide — 3,400 of which are in 100 foreign countries. In Latin America and the Caribbean, which have been identified as the main current geographical target for mineral exploration, Canadian mining corporations represent the largest percentage of foreign mining companies — with interests in more than 1,200 properties."

Canada's "Continental" Response

Canada now ranks twelfth among the world's nations in military spending. Of NATO's 19 member countries, Canada ranks sixth in total military spending (\$16 billion). For 2005 Canada's military expenditures were \$14.7 billion (\$450 per capita) representing 1% of the all military expenditures. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2005 annual report places Canada as the 6th largest seller of military weapons in the world. Canadian defence industry is worth \$7 billion (US) per year and employs 70,000 Canadian workers. Half of all sales come from the US and close to 80% is to NATO allies.

Prime Minister Harper's decision to turn a war of occupation in Kabul into a war of aggression in Kandahar has increased military expenditures to \$15.7 billion and rising. Canadian Government spending on NATO for 2005 (combined personnel and equipment) was \$6.4 billion, or 60.4% of total military expenditures and an increase of 20% over year 2000. The Canadian Government spends 60% of its military expenditures on NATO and only 40% on the defence of Canadian territory, airspace and coastal waters.

Canada's Defence Budget: 1993-2007

The US defence budget for fiscal year 2008 is \$623 billion which is 21% of a total \$2.9 trillion US budget. With the 2008 US defence budget, America's military budget has doubled since Bush took office in 2000 and is now higher in real terms than any other

year in the last half-century

US military expenditures for 2005 were \$482.2 billion (\$1,604 per capita) exceeding by \$116.6 billion the expenditures of the next fifteen highest nation states put together. The 2008 budget increases per capita spending to \$2050.00 or a 25% increase over the 2005 levels. The US economic dependency on war and military expenditures is the Achilles heel of US imperialism not as many opine, its great strength. US military expenditures on NATO for personnel and equipment totaled \$192.23 billion in 2000 and increased to \$262.29 billion by 2005 a rise of 36.4% in five years.

It is clear from these figures why Canadian military decisions are taken at Brussels and not in Ottawa. The big money is at NATO. On September 18th 2006, the Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment of NATO announced that the 26 member countries have begun building a 75 million euro command and control system for missile defence. This is only the start. NATO has produced a 10,000 page report that endorses the US plan to deploy ballistic missiles to space that will increase the initial investment to unlimited heights. It is the anticipation of huge profits that has caused the Harper Government to state its willingness to re-open talks with the Bush Administration on Canadian participation in Ballistic Missile Defence.

Not satisfied with current levels of military expenditures and Canada's current rejection of US BMD, J. L. Granatstein in the Fall 2007 CDFAI report entitled "A Threatened Future: Canada's Future Strategic Environment and its Security Implications" recommends that "Given Canada's impressive economic capacity, we think an overall defence budget at a level equivalent to the NATO average (2.2 per cent of GDP) would be a reasonable target. In 2007 dollars, that would generate an annual budget of approximately \$25 billion, or roughly \$9 to 10 billion more than the current figure."

David S. McDonough, Ph.D. Programme, Department of Political Science, Dalhousie University in the Spring 2006/07, Volume 9, Issue 3 edition of the Journal of Military and Strategic Studies report entitled "BMD and US Strategic Doctrine: Canadian Strategic Interests in the Debate on Missile Defence" conclude that, "In the end, Ottawa should go into any deliberation on missile defence with its eyes open and recognize that a more sophisticated and 'limited' approach to missile defence, while having a clear relationship with an aggressive American strategic doctrine, could also be in Canada's strategic interest."

Harper's Minority Government and BMD

Any debate in Canadian parliament over the Harper minority government policy of Canadian "re-engagement" into US BMD is being bypassed and slipped into Canadian foreign policy through phony sleaze campaigns diverting public attention from the real aim of Harper's backers.

BMD is part of the strategic military policy of US imperialism which is fueling a new arms race. The defeat of Harper will forestall BMD and help prevent a new global arms race. The Canadian Peace Congress is working with all progressive peace forces in drawing attention to this dangerous escalation of a new global arms race led in Canada by the Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The defeat of Harper will strengthen the interests of anti-imperialism and send a signal to US-NATO military councils that the Canadian people desire peace, progress and international solidarity over war, neo-colonialism and imperialism. ■



Declaration of the European Conference in Defense of Peace

Lisbon, Portugal — September 28-29, 2007

Declaration of the Conference of European Peace Organisations jointly convened by the World Peace Council (WPC), Confederal Group of the European United Left-Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) and Portuguese Council for Peace and Cooperation

Participants representing 20 Peace Organisations and Movements from 14 European countries gathered in Lisbon, Portugal at the same time as the informal meeting in Evora, Portugal of the ministers of Defense of the EU. The meeting of peace organizations after fruitful exchanges of views issued the following declaration:

1. The peoples of Europe are facing growing threats to global peace and security resulting from militarization of international relations and increasing imperialist aggressions around the world. The peace conference demands an immediate cessation of these war driven policies. Instead, the peace conference upholds the promotion of peaceful relations in the continent and with the whole world and calls for improvements in the social well being of the peoples of Europe.

2. Considering the rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty in many societies, and in particular by referenda in France and Holland, participants in the peace conference declare that the reformed European Treaty continues to be a clear expression of the ongoing dangerous course towards increasing the concentration of political decision-making power directed against the sovereignty of the peoples, pervasive intrusion of security agencies into civic life within the Union, and the projection of strengthened military might onto the world stage. The reformed Treaty ignores the views of the people and serves the interests of the corporations in all spheres. We demand that the will of the peoples of Europe and their democratic rights to be respected, and that any reform treaty should be submitted to referenda in every country of the Union.

3. The growing supremacy of the economic interest of corporations and the states is intimately connected to the militarization of Europe and has resulted in diminished civic, social and labour rights and the criminalization of civic resistance. The undermining of the quality of democratic rights and democratic institutions has paved the way for the intrusion and promotion of extremist doctrines and actions by aggressive criminal groups such as emerging xenophobic and Nazi gangs. The undermining of democratic rights is accompanied by campaigns and political persecution of progressive and peace forces which is alien to the sentiments and interests of the social and people's movements,

4. International relations are becoming more and more militarized. The European Union is more frequently taking aggressive stances in its international relations vis a vis the resolution of latent and emerging conflicts, or prolonged and ongoing wars. The complicity of the European Union with NATO, a self-appointed aggressive alliance of world jurisdiction, is not only a danger to peace in the world but as well a dangerous and self-destructive policy for the peoples of Europe.

The active military interventions by the EU in the Balkans, Central Asia and Middle East continue and are to be condemned. The presence of numerous European military bases and increased deployment of military forces in Africa (namely the EU mission in Chad and the Central African Republic) are cases for deep concern considering the past and in view of future developments in that continent.

5. The further militarization of the European Union by the installation of military bases outside national borders, the creation of rapid deployment interventionist army battle corps and new naval groups designed to impose its political-economic will in Europe and elsewhere in the world, the development of new weapons and integrated military surveillance and command systems, the trade or supply of weapons to third parties to serve economic interests or gain economic or political leverage by use of force overseas, are all symptoms of an imperialist policy that represents an immoral and immense waste of resources and poses a perilous danger to international security and peace. To the contrary, the peoples of Europe demand a stop to the militarization of Europe.

6. Combined modern space and ground platforms allow for global intelligence, surveillance and command signals that, in conjunction with available launch carriers and missiles, empower the USA and some other military powers to lead the world into newer and unimaginable dangerous levels of warfare, in the core of the European continent, at its boundaries and beyond.

Developments on European territory or elsewhere that result in military escalation, namely in the domain of land and space platforms that carry warfare to outer space, are to be deeply rejected as hegemonic and imperialist, challenging peace and security and provoking further military threats.

7. We have witnessed a renewed expansion of the global military expenditures over the past decade, at an annual growth rate of nearly 4%, reaching \$1,200 billion USD in 2006 (half of this accounted for by the USA). Only one part of that huge destructive expenditure would have been sufficient to implement the Development Goals agreed

by the UN Millennium Summit in the year 2000 aimed at the eradication of poverty and securing basic education and health conditions in the world.

8. It is in the earnest interest of the peace loving peoples of Europe and the world in general that the European Union renounces any kind of neo-colonialist or paternalistic attitude vis a vis third parties. Instead, the Union ought to engage in open and mutual relations with neighbouring countries and all those with whom they share economic and political interrelations. In no case can any country invoke "national interest" or "strategic value" and resort to aggression in order to gain access to essential resources or commodities.

9. Europe ought to promote an open dialogue among nations, fostering demilitarization and denuclearization, through international consultation within the framework of the UNO and of the OSCE. This should be undertaken while respecting past treaties and their enforcement, in particular those treaties that have contributed to diminishing the growth of military threats and that promote détente along the lines of past decades.

All parties ought to abide by their commitments and neither renounce nor impose them unilaterally, as some nuclear powers have done and are doing. European nuclear powers, in particular, ought to be active parties in reducing and in renouncing the possession, deployment or use of such weapons of mass destruction.

Our urgent purpose and resolve is to establish nuclear weapons free zones and finally attain complete banishment of nuclear weapons all over the world.

10. The peoples of Europe have repeatedly expressed their desire for a better future and their opposition to military interventions, aggressions and occupations where their countries are involved. As well, they have expressed their active solidarity with the peoples who are the victims of aggression or any form of oppression. We express our solidarity with all the peoples of the former Yugoslavia who confront the consequences of imperialist interference and aggression aimed at converting their countries into protectorates of the USA, EU or NATO and who are compelled to host foreign military bases. We denounce the US and EU plans to recognize an independent Kosovo as a clear violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and an open violation of international law.

11. Peace movements all over Europe are expressing their support and solidarity with the peoples of Poland and the Czech Republic, who are rejecting the deployment of US "Missile Defense Shield" bases in their countries. The growth of NATO is proving to be a pretext for expanding its military infrastructures into Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria, accelerating a trend of militarization of the whole European territory and the lives of their people, promoting an aggressive posture vis a vis neighbouring countries and threatening others elsewhere in the world.

This course of events contradicts the desire for peace of the peoples of Europe who reject aggressive alliances and demand that immediate steps be taken to effect the dismantling of NATO.

12. The capitalist economic system is depleting natural resources at a fast rate. There is a growing military competition among capitalist states for access and possession of the remaining resources. War is not only immoral, it also fails to accomplish the perverse purposes of sustaining economically the great political powers and economic interests that engage in war to appropriate and exploit the riches of other countries. The history of the late colonial wars, the Vietnam war and the more recent wars on Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, the ongoing genocide in Palestine, prove that military might cannot force the peoples to submit and surrender their inalienable and legitimate right to resist the aggressors.

In this context, we vehemently reject any move, by whatever pretext, that promotes an attack on Iran and declare it to be one more flagrant violation of international law and the UN Charter. We likewise demand a halt to the involvement of European countries and the EU in Afghanistan, siding with the USA and NATO (in ISAF), and firmly reject the idea of an EU-lead EUROPOL mission there.

13. It is our peaceful resolve to renounce the ongoing arms race and to fight for the demilitarization and disarmament of Europe, to promote equitable political relationships among nations, free of military threats and imperialist domination.

That vision encompasses a continent free of foreign military bases and disengaged from any military alliance. ■

Initiatives Organised by the Portuguese Council for Peace and Co-operation (CPPC)

On the occasion of the holding in Lisbon, Portugal, of the Heads of State and Government EU/Africa Summit, the Portuguese Council for Peace and Co-operation (CPPC) organised several initiatives around this topic.

The CPPC launched these initiatives in a moment in which an EU-Africa Joint Strategy is proposed, supposedly a partnership of equals. What the Summit produced, in our view, is contradictory with this proclaimed objective. Economic Partnership Agreements demand even more from the African Countries than the current WTO regulations. The Action plan is focussed much more on military and security operations than on a clear commitment to aid to development and debt relief. These and other concerns of the Portuguese Peace movement and other Portuguese and foreign organisations, were voiced in the events organised by the CPPC in Lisbon.

- The first initiative was a debate "A EUROPE OF PEACE AND ITS RELATIONS WITH AFRICA," held in Lisbon on 7th December, organised by the Portuguese Council for Peace and Co-operation in association with the French Peace Movement. In this debate took part representatives from the CPPC, the French Peace Movement, OSPAAAL and CEDESPAZ from Spain and the representative in Portugal of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, as well as several Portuguese civil society organisations, which included the trade union movement.

This debate was held on the eve of the Lisbon EU/Africa Summit and focussed on several issues related to the relationship between Europe and Africa, co-operation between the European Peace organisations and the African nations, as well as problems concerning the daily life of African immigrants in Europe.

- On the 8th of December 2007 the CPPC in co-operation with CEAS and CEDESPAZ from Spain and CGTP-IN, the Portuguese National Trade Union Centre, organised a public rally in solidarity with the Saharawi people, coinciding with the procedures of the EU/Africa Summit in Lisbon.

The Portuguese Council for Peace and Co-operation — CPPC, the Co-ordination of Solidarity Associations with Sahara — CEAS (Spain), and the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers — CGTP-IN wanted to expose and remind, with this action, the serious situation in which the Saharawi people live for the past 32 years and demand that international law is enforced so that the Saharawis may exercise their right to self-determination and independence, and that all other African peoples may freely decide their future after de-colonization.

- **Rally Lisbon-Dakar 2008:** On the eve of the 2008 edition of the Rally Lisbon-Dakar, the Portuguese Council for Peace and Co-operation organized a protest event denouncing the situation in Western Sahara. The rally will pass Smara one of the occupied cities of Western Sahara and the CPPC appealed to all media to take this opportunity to dedicate some of their attention to the problem of Saharawi people. The Saharawi living in Smara are as all Saharawi in the occupied territories victims of violence and persecution on the hands of the Moroccan entities.



Summary Report on the WPC Regional Meeting ...

(from p. 3)

Canada's role in the US-NATO led war in Afghanistan are a reflection of an alliance of finance-military-oil capital willing to sacrifice the youth of the country in exchange for profit. A statement was read which was well received (please see Appendix A for the full text).

Paraguay

Najeeb Amando briefly summarized the peace situation in Paraguay and noted that "discussions of imperialism in South America form the basis of the current revolutionary socialist transformations occurring on the continent."

He said that the government of Paraguay is utilizing fear as the basis for the introduction of "terrorism issues." He stressed the new role of military forces in the cities and that the military is characterizing bourgeois politics of the nation through fear and intimidation.

Amando said that the peace forces are combating the forces of reaction through historical education, developing networks and cultural and political challenges to bourgeois power. He indicated that building an affiliated peace organization within Paraguay to the WPC is great importance which will be tackled in the coming year.

Uruguay

Juan Canessa thanked the WPC assembly for the opportunity to participate in the meetings. Canessa briefly summarized the current political situation in Uruguay characterizing the content as "popular" and generally anti-imperialist nature. The Uruguay peace forces are gaining a great deal of experience through the anti-imperialist fight back but are confronted by a reactionary media.

Juan Canessa said that "Uruguay has

been present in the WPC in the past and now needs to re-affiliate with it as a task of first rate importance." He went on to say that "international solidarity will be understood not only as the fight against war but will have the reach of social equality for our people."

Chile

Sergio Sepiélveda thanked the WPC for inviting Chile to participate in the Assembly meetings. Sepiélveda told the WPC delegates that he was attending the World Federation of Democratic Youth and that WFDY has a long a rich relationship with the WPC.

Sepiélveda noted that Chile currently does not have a "committee for Peace" but that the need for a "break with coalition work" is important as it submerges the anti-imperialist forces in coalition work not allowing for more independent anti-imperialist positions. He requested materials to take back to Chile to help in the formation of a new peace council.

Sepiélveda said "the need to coordinate the working class and peace movement in Chile is a necessity; it needs to occur to help prevent resource wars for water, etc."

Special Note of Appreciation

The Canadian Peace Congress would like to express a special acknowledgement of appreciation for the work of Maria Alejandra Arias who works for the Andean parliament in her tireless work to translate for the Canadian Peace Congress delegate. She translated, took notes, and organized much of the meeting. With out her help this report would not have been possible. The Canadian Peace Congress is very grateful for all of Maria's efforts.

EDITORIAL: Report to the WPC Executive Committee

(from p. 3)

its condemnation of the European Constitution and any conventions which adopt war, especially pre-emptive war, as a means to settle differences, our opposition to the attempts under way to overturn governments and finally our defence of the peoples' right to choose their own paths.

The domination of the new imperialist world order is worsening the economic situation of the working people and of the peoples in general in both developed and developing countries. The promotion of capitalist restructuring with the withdrawal of workers' gains and the implementation of flexible forms of employment, the abolition of collective agreements and the generalized privatizations in all sectors are causing an increase in poverty, unemployment, hunger and misery. Social contradictions are on the rise. Today 10 percent of the world's population owns 90 percent of the total wealth produced. Discontent is growing and the working people are waging struggles with which the peace movement can and must link up. It is becoming more evident every day that imperialism as a system on the whole and capitalism not only are incapable of dealing with the problems of humanity, but also are leading it into barbarity.

In the recent period authoritarianism, policing and the offensive against democratic rights and liberties have become harsher. Worldwide popular reactions and demonstrations are facing often-bloody attacks by the police and other repressive forces. In the USA, the EU and in other countries laws are being passed which in the name of dealing with terrorism do away with democratic rights and freedoms. They give power and rights to police authorities and secret services to act without restraint. All citizens are under suspicion and considered to be guilty. CIA

activity has been officially disclosed, with its illegal abductions and arrests of hundreds of innocent citizens being made with the agreement of European governments, along with the use of European airports for their transport. A monstrous monitoring system has been set up, ranging from cameras spying on all of people's activities all the way to the establishment of databases including DNA files. Thousands of demonstrators are being dragged into court and sentenced on false charges so that they and others will be intimidated.

At the same time, the ideological offensive is growing and the falsifying of history is being pushed so as to justify the crimes of imperialism. Any country that does not submit is considered, under imperialism, to be undemocratic and any people that resists is considered to be terrorist.

An attempt is under way to revive fascism in Europe. In the Baltic and other countries, collaborators and other Nazi criminals are considered freedom fighters. Anti-fascists are being persecuted. Communist parties are illegal. Monuments to the victory over fascism are being torn down. Statues of SS officers are being erected. Progressive movements are being slandered in order to poison the minds of the younger generation.

We must safeguard democratic rights, the history of the movements for peace and progress, the sacrifices and the blood that has been shed by the peoples for their freedom and for social progress.

Regardless of any specific differences that may exist amongst them, all peace movements have the obligation to tell the truth and not permit the ideological Middle Ages and obscurantism that imperialism is attempting to impose. We must safeguard the right of every people to choose its own path. ■

DELEGATION OF THE WORLD PEACE COUNCIL VISITS THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF LAOS FOR THE FIRST TIME

At the invitation of the Lao Peace and Solidarity Committee, a delegation of the World Peace Council visited the People's Democratic Republic of Laos and its capital Vientiane, on November 21-23, 2007. The delegation was composed by Iraklis Tsavdaridis, Executive Secretary of WPC and representative of EEDYE, Yul Jabour, General Secretary of COSI, Venezuela, MP Sandra Benfica, member of the Secretariat of the CPPC Portugal, and Maria Zaida Chmaruk, member of the board of MOPASSOL, Argentina.



The visit started with a meeting with the leadership of the Lao Peace and Solidarity Committee, traditional member of the WPC, headed by Somsanouk Mixay, General Secretary, which allowed an important exchange of opinions and information on the current international situation; on the work carried out by both organizations; and on the steps towards deepening their relationship. It was with particular pleasure that the WPC delegation, conveyed the first official invitation for the participation in the World Peace Assembly in April 2008 in Caracas. The invitation was received with enthusiasm and was a sign of the growing dynamism of the World Peace Council and of its capacity to meet the enormous demands raised by the international situation, marked by the increased aggressiveness of imperialism.

The WPC delegation was received very warmly and had many opportunities to meet and talk with leaders of the government and the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. The meeting was attended by the comrades Boun Nhang Xasanavong, General Director of the International Relations of the Mass Organisations Department of the LPR Party.

A special moment was the meeting with the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Comrade Hiem Phommachanh, member of the Politburo of the LPR Party, in which the situation in the region and the world was discussed.

Besides the strong common commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and to reinforce the international peace movement, the delegation also got acquainted with the social and economic situation in Laos and the outstanding undergoing projects for developing the country.

Despite the shortness of the visit, the WPC had the chance to visit the Vientiane Province and observe the important steps and achievements, especially at the Nam Ngum Hydropower Plant, as well as the Rehabilitation Centre, Koutsambath, founded in 1992, which is hosting the direct victims of the dirty US War against Vietnam and their families.

That occasion was lived with emotion, during which the WPC expressed its heartfelt respect and solidarity with the people of Laos, with their heroic struggle and key role — so often forgotten — in the defeat of US imperialism in the Vietnam War. It is not forgotten that, from 1964 to 1973, three million tons of cluster bombs were dropped over Laos (one ton per inhabitant at the time); and that 30 years after the end of the war, around 30 percent of them have still not exploded. This is a genuine, prolonged crime against the people of Laos which is still without a solution in sight.

The Lao Peace and Solidarity Committee assured the WPC delegation about its intention to actively participate in the WPC Assembly in Caracas and its disposition to contribute to its success.

WPC RESOLUTION: FIVE YEARS AFTER THE INVASION OF IRAQ

WHEREAS, an unstable and frightened world is approaching the 5th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq and the 6th anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan by US imperialism and its European and other junior partners, leading to untold deaths and destruction; and

WHEREAS, the US administration threatens World War III against Iran with unfounded claims and accusations reminiscent of the lies and forged arguments used to hide the real purpose of the imperialist invasion of Iraq for oil and control of the Middle East; and

WHEREAS, the arms race, with new and more deadly weapons, has spiraled to over one trillion dollars annually, creating an ocean of weapons capable of destroying all humanity, devouring national treasuries for the profit of the death merchants, depriving billions of people of basic human needs: food, clothing, shelter and water; and

WHEREAS, the imperialist designs for the continued Israeli occupation of Palestine; the Israeli invasion and bombing of Lebanon; the US-India Nuclear Exchange deal; support of the dictator Musharraf in Pakistan; use of US military bases in Somalia, Colombia, Philippines to intervene in their internal affairs; continued blockade and threats against Cuba; establishment of an African Military Command to invade Africa politically and economically; have, among others, has created a global crisis and a threat to world peace; and

WHEREAS, in answer to this crisis, a Global Peace Movement of historic proportions has emerged, labeled as "the second superpower," struggling for peace and justice, recognizing that imperialism is not invincible and can be defeated by the united strength of the world's peace loving people,

THEREFORE, the Secretariat of the World Peace Council calls upon all peace loving people, all organizations devoted to peace and justice, to march together in a global display of determination and will for peace, in common days of action, with protest demonstrations in central squares of cities and in front of US Embassies the days around the 5th Anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, March 20, 2008.

*WPC Secretariat
November 21, 2007*



Peace NEWS



**“NO TO IMPERIALIST WARS”
“YES TO THE PEOPLES’ PEACE
AND FRIENDSHIP”**

Peace Olympics 2008

Under this slogan, the Greek Committee for International Détente and Peace (EEDYE) together with many mass organizations and distinguished personalities is going to proceed with organizing the Peace Olympics 2008, during the year of the Olympic Games in Beijing.

The purpose of this initiative is:

- To bring to the limelight the peoples all over the world who worry, react and struggle against the barbarity they experience as a consequence of the criminal action of imperialism, which causes the fires of war, hunger, poverty and environmental destruction.
- To denounce in the most decisive way the constant slide of the Olympic Games from being a major cultural, athletic and mainly peace-loving event to the point of being a market for the sponsors’ benefit and promotion, the market’s values, for commercialization and rivalries. However, the impunity of the sponsors and the rivalries are not compatible with the Olympic ideals and the fraternization of the people.
- This initiative aims to pinpoint the necessity for the Olympic Games to be a celebration of peace and athletics in accordance with the people’s conscience.

With the activities of the Peace Olympics 2008 we try to express the people’s voice. We make an effort to organize various political, cultural, and sports events with the participation of representatives from popular movements. We make an effort for the organization of activities and events all over Greece with the participation of athletes, artists, retired military officers, trade unions, workers federations, personalities from art and culture, professors, youth organizations, students, and distinguished personalities from political and social life.

Among these initiatives, the EEDYE is going to organize a “Balkan Meeting of the Peace Movements” in Thessaloniki on the 1st and 2nd of March 2008, and the traditional Marathon Peace March in May 2008.

TWISTED JUSTICE IN MIAMI

Manuel E. Yepe*

Similar to the kidnapping of the Cuban boy, Elián González, seven years ago, a five year-old Cuban girl is today the center of an international dispute over her custody in the only place in the world where something like this could happen: the US city of Miami, in south Florida.

Like the Elian case that won world notoriety, the plaintiff is the father of the child, and the arguments of the kidnapers are mostly based on the irrational policy of the United States against Cuba.

In this case, the alleged kidnapper is a wealthy entrepreneur called Joe Cubas, involved in human trafficking, who, under the façade of a sports agent, has made a fortune in the illegal dealing of Cuban athletes. He has been using intelligence logistics and US subversion against the island, and the support of Cuban-American extremist groups which have transmuted hatred of the Cuban socialist project into a money-making business. This includes political wheeling and dealing which involves top-ranking government officials of the State of Florida in the United States.

Bob Butterworth, Secretary of the Department of Children and Families in the State of Florida (DCF in its English acronym), whose lawyers are battling to prevent the Cuban father from obtaining custody of his daughter, told the Miami press that this “unusual” case is the costliest he has ever seen.

The little girl is daughter of a Cuban campesino from Cabaiguán in the central region of the island and Elena Pérez, a 35-year-old woman who left Cuba legally and arrived in the United States in December 2005 with the daughter in question and her son. Shortly after her arrival in Miami, her new husband, Jesús Melendres, abandoned them.

According to reports in the Miami press, Elena, evidently disturbed because of the economic situation she faced for several months, tried to commit suicide. This was the reason her children were taken from her. The DCF took her children from her in March of 2006 and placed them in the care of Joe Cubas.

When Rafael Izquierdo found out, he decided to assume his duty and his right as a father, and was able to travel to the United States to bring his daughter back.

The mother has been categorical in declaring that if she cannot have her daughter she wants her to return to Cuba with her father, “who loves her and wants to be with her.” Anything would be better — the mother said — than leaving her in the United States in the care of Joe Cubas, who has kept the little girl for over a year and formally adopted her brother.

According to the local press, the 13-year-old adolescent told his mother that he wants to stay with Joe Cubas amidst the luxury in which he is kept.

Elena has declared that she regrets having left the small town of Cabaiguán where her children were happy. “I know this country

seems marvelous to many people but I am disappointed in it,” Elena Pérez expressed, and described her attempted suicide in a moment of weakness amidst a situation of desperation and destitution.

“One horrible night I decided that my children would be better off without me and so I did something stupid,” she declared. I am not crazy. I have been depressed and stressed-out and spent many sleepless nights but I am ok.”

The U.S. judge, Jeri B. Cohen, risks her career attempting to act impartially in the Miami environment, in a legal process which is becoming ever more political. She acknowledged that the case would have another outcome, in which “the United States government refuses to repatriate the child to a communist country where her father lives.” She also revealed that “employees of the State of Florida” — the name given to the legal representation of a state government in trial — want the child to remain in the United States in the custody of a Cuban American family. “They would have acted differently if the child’s father lived anywhere but Cuba.”

“In over 10 years of presiding over cases of child welfare I had never seen lawyers of the Department of Children and Family of the State of Florida act against a father to raise his child unless he had repeatedly failed to comply with a court-ordered stipulations,” the judge declared.

Considering the tense relations between the United States and Cuba, I believe that “the father may never see his daughter again if he returns to the island without her.” It is easy to understand, however, that the judge is working under great pressure, and that the trial is not taking place in a fair climate of objectivity and impartiality.

A clear example of the incompatibility of the Miami environment in a reasonable legal process was the sentencing, in 2001, amidst the hostile atmosphere of southern Florida, to

severe prison terms for five Cubans who penetrated counterrevolutionary groups to monitor and denounce terrorist plans against their homeland constantly under attack through the passive complicity of US authorities.

On August 2005, the Federal Eleventh Circuit Appeals Court in Atlanta reversed those sentences decreed against the five anti-terrorist activists, who have been in jail since 1998 under vile conditions and dispersed in different prisons of several states of the US union.

In the Atlanta Appeals Court, three judges unanimously made this ruling after observing the fraudulent process which had occurred in Miami, although, at the time, the defense gave solid arguments that the venue was unacceptable, but the acting judge inexplicably rejected these.

The verdict of the Appeals Court noted that the hostility and prejudice in the Miami environment, both in the public as the local press, made it impossible to hold an impartial trial in that city “dominated by such marked prejudice against the Cuban government that a legal process was impossible against men who openly identified with the government of their country and with the objective necessity of defending the Cuban people from terrorism.”

With such a categorical statement by the Appeals Court, it was logical that the Prosecution disallow the charges and immediately release the five Cubans. But the opposite occurred. On the insistence of the Federal government, the decision was reversed and the promoters of this legal aberration that was the trial in Miami against “The Five” were stimulated to commit more outrages.

In this legal setting, a Cuban father fights to recover his young daughter in Miami.

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Press Release

Department of Arab & International Relations /PLO
Ramallah, Palestine — October 24th, 2007

The Israeli military raid against Palestinian inmates at the Negev prison on Monday 22nd had left one dead Palestinian and 250 injured. The act is one more page in the persistent Israeli policy of killing and torturing the Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails. Tens of Palestinian prisoners were killed in the Israeli jails over the years either by direct assassination, torture and medical negligence.

Since a few months, the Israeli Ministry of Health admitted that the Israeli Jails authorities has been using the Palestinian prisoners as lab rats to test new medications without the knowledge or the approval of those individuals. Ramifications of those medications are yet to be revealed.

Israel is the last occupation state on earth; the only state that refuses to implement International resolutions and treaties, it also refuses to deal with the Palestinian prisoners in its jails are prisoners of war as stated by International and humanitarian treaties; torturing Palestinian prisoners and risking their lives is held in criminal manners that need the interference of the International judicial bodies to.

The Israeli persistence on detaining more than 11,000 Palestinian prisoners reflects an Israeli reluctant towards implementation of the peace process articles.

DAIR confirms that there won't be a comprehensive peace without the unconditional release of the Arab and Palestinian prisoners from the Israeli jails. DAIR calls upon all humanitarian and international organizations not to spare any effort to secure the Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli jails; all peace lovers and human rights defenders are invited to implement serious steps to release all the prisoners in the Israeli jails without any condition.



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